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["BUST, CHARMING MISS CAREW? WHAT A PRETTY PICTURE YOU ARE MAKING OF THE OLD PLACE!"]

IVY'S PERIL.

CHAPTER III.

HUGH AINSLIE determined to keep his suspicions to himself. He did not come to this decision without long and earnest thought. His first impulse had been to go straight to Sir John and denounce Mrs. Austin as an impostor.

A very little reflection showed him how hopeless this would be. Sir John, kind, good-hearted old gentleman as he was, had one trying characteristic—he was about as obstinate as a mule.

He never would consent to see with other people's eyes, and if he once took a fancy to a person you might preach against that person until you were—metaphorically speaking—black in the face without producing the slightest change in his opinion.

Unluckily the Baronet was disposed to like both Mrs. Austin and her brother, and the Vicar of Starham knew perfectly nothing but

the most glaring proofs of their baseness would influence Sir John.

How weak and lame his own story sounded! Eighteen or nineteen years ago a woman had come to him to talk about Mrs. Carew, and had given a false address.

Sir John would laugh at the idea of the wealthy widow demeaning herself by such conduct; besides, there was not the slightest resemblance between the two—nothing in all the world but a crooked finger and a slight similarity of handwriting.

Hugh Ainslie could see the storm of ridicule which would break upon his head.

The Baronet would naturally demand why he had kept the secret of the nurse's visit all these years, and what earthly motive he could find for Mrs. Austin and her brother to have been interested in the misfortunes of the beautiful, hapless creature who had once been Helen Carew.

No; the Vicar soon saw if anything was to come of his discovery it must come from his keeping a strict silence on the matter. All he could do was to watch the proceedings of the millionaire and his sister; set, as it were, a

private guard over their movements, and try and find some clue to the mystery which he felt sure linked their history with that of his dead love.

So Mr. Ainslie accepted the invitation to dinner, and drove over to Meadow View, to find himself the sole guest. Just a quiet quartet sat down to table since Paul Beresford had returned from London, and took his usual place.

The Vicar was almost ashamed of his suspicions, for he was treated as an honoured guest. Mrs. Austin consulted him on what part Meadow View should take in parish charities, and Mr. White talked politics with much animation, showing he was of the Vicar's own side, and giving one or two rubs at their mutual antagonists, which did Hugh Ainslie's very heart good.

The dinner was good, without absurd display; the wine was first-rate, and the conversation never flagged.

Mr. Ainslie began to doubt if, after all, he had been suspicious without cause.

"I think St. Arran's a charming neighbourhood," said Mrs. Austin, later on, when she

dispensed coffee in the drawing-room, "and this is a delightful house. How it could have stood empty all these years I can't imagine."

"The last tenant had a very unhappy fate," said Mr. White, slowly, "and country people are suspicious. It's not everyone has your nerves, my dear Janetta."

"Captain Carew died of malaria at Rome," put in the Vicar. "It was an unhappy fate in that he was young, and had much to make life precious to him; but I cannot think his end had anything to do with the long time his house remained unoccupied. If all dwellings were shunned because their last tenant died young there would be a great many more empty houses than there are."

Mr. White looked round cautiously, almost as though he expected the doors to have ears; then he said slowly,—

"No one cares to occupy a house whose last tenant was murdered! I assure you I had had scruples about it myself, but my sister has nerves of iron. She wanted to come here. She had heard a great deal of Meadow View, and to please her I gave in. I don't say I am sorry. I like the place well enough, and, after all, Charles Carew didn't die here, so I see no reason why his spirit, if it can't rest, should haunt Meadow View."

The drops of perspiration stood on Hugh Ainslie's brow like great beads.

"I don't understand," he cried, hoarsely. "Captain Carew murdered! You must be making some strange mistake; he was my intimate friend, and I know that he died of malaria at Rome."

"He died of poison," said the millionaire, calmly; "by whom administered there was no proof. His widow must have had a hand in it, for she fled from the place almost as soon as he was buried."

"Sir," and Paul Beresford felt a thrill of admiration for the man's fearless defence of his lost friend, "I assure you you are under some extraordinary mistake. Mrs. Carew would not have dreamed of such a thing. It was not in her nature. She simply could not."

Mrs. Austin smiled.

"She has a warm defender in you, Mr. Ainslie, but I am quite of your opinion. I always said Helen Carew had no hand in her husband's death. Still it was a dark business, and it would have been far better for her had she only stood her ground bravely, and faced it out. It was her sudden flight gave colour to the reports against her."

"She was so young," said the poor Vicar sadly, thinking of the last time he had seen her, a girl of nineteen, holding up her baby to the window of the railway carriage as the train bore her away from Starham for ever. "If she knew the faintest suspicion rested on her she would take fright and hide herself. It was natural."

"I never believed anything against her," said the widow, kindly. "She was the loveliest creature I ever saw, more beautiful even than her daughter."

"And did you know her?"

"We visited her at Rome, and later on we met her in Paris. Her troubles had begun then, poor girl."

"Aye, she was an exile from home, I expect. Sir John heard the rumours you mention. He went to Rome soon after Captain Carew's death, and when he returned he never alluded to his sister-in-law."

"Ah, but she had more troubles than that," said Mr. White, gently. "Her second husband was no better than he ought to have been. She and her poor child had a bad time of it."

"Her second husband?"

"Didn't you know? She married again, almost immediately."

Mr. Ainslie remembered Ivy's words, "I remember papa, and I think—though I know it's wicked—I hated him." Words that had perplexed the Vicar sorely when spoken, but which he understood perfectly now.

"It is a sad story."

"Very, acquiesced Mr. White, "but at least it has not hurt the child. I never saw a more winsome creature. Her father's fate, and the sad shadow on her mother's name, have not blighted her future. She is a beautiful girl, and with her money is sure of making a splendid match."

"Does Lady Fortescue know of your acquaintance with the Carews?"

"Oh, no! I can see the subject is a painful one, and I would not for worlds trouble her, but it was chiefly for Ivy's sake I persuaded my brother to take Meadow View."

For Ivy's sake! The falsehood was glibly uttered, and yet it had a shade of truth in it.

Mrs. Austin had not come to Meadow View to give Miss Carew pleasure, or save her pain; and yet, had Ivy Carew not lived at St. Arran's, both the millionaire and his sister would have remained in London.

"I am sure your motives were kind."

"They were, indeed. Poor Mrs. Carew made me promise once to befriend her child if ever it was in my power. It seemed to me the girl could hardly attain her majority without hearing some of the sad memoirs about her mother, and that it might be a comfort to her if I were near to step forward boldly and say, 'I was in Rome at the time of Captain Carew's death, and I feel sure his wife had no hand in it. George thinks me ridiculous, but to me a promise is sacred.'"

The Vicar felt a pang of remorse. How he had mistrusted this kind widow, though she had a crooked finger, and though her writing bore a marvellous resemblance to the scrap he had treasured for years! His certainty was shaken. He began to think this was not his strange victim after all.

"Of course," said Mr. White, abruptly, as the Vicar was taking leave, "you will not say a word of all this to the Fortescues, or to Miss Carew? Neither Janetta or myself would wound their feelings for the world. We feel that our old acquaintance with poor Mrs. Carew makes it, in some measure, our duty to take an interest in her daughter; but we would not, on any account, awake painful memories in the hearts of her ancle and aunt."

Paul Beresford had risen to accompany Mr. Ainslie to the door, and he walked down the avenue with him, and even a part of the winding lane that led to Starham, the two never had met before, and taken a strange fancy to each other. For some time neither spoke; then Paul asked suddenly—

"Mr. Ainslie, what do you think of it all?"

The Vicar felt puzzled.

"I think Mrs. Austin undoubtedly knew Mrs. Carew abroad."

"Yes, I suppose so, but why has she forgotten the acquaintance all these years, and come forward to renew it now? Mr. Ainslie, I am half an Italian, and I am more superstitious than you, who are wholly English. I believe this woman has it in her power to do Miss Carew some deadly wrong, and she means to use that power."

"Miss Carew will never be at her mercy; the Fortescues will know how to protect their niece; besides, what wrong could Mrs. Austin do to her?"

"I don't know!"

"It may be only the curiosity of a common mind to know more of a high-born family, of whose secrets she has already learned a little."

"If it were only she—but Mr. White is in it. I have heard him say he could not live a week out of London, but he has taken this house for six months."

"For his health?"

"His health is perfect! I cannot tell his object in coming to St. Arran's, but it is connected with Miss Carew!"

"With Ivy? Impossible!"

"Before I had ever seen her I had Mr. White's instructions to find out two things about her—whether she was in good health, and whether she was engaged to be married."

"Both questions are easily answered. Ivy never ailed anything in her life, and not only

is she disengaged, but I know of no suitor who is in the least likely to make her give up her freedom."

"But why did White want to know?"

The Vicar shook his head.

"It sounds sacrilege to think he aspired to her hand himself," said Paul; "he, with his world-worn nature and mercenary heart, ought not to dream of a wife like Miss Carew."

Mr. Ainslie fairly laughed.

"You are alarming yourself needlessly, my young friend. If I am any judge of character I am quite certain George White has no intentions matrimonial."

After that Mr. Ainslie often went to Meadow View. Sometimes he was the only guest—sometimes he met the Fortescues and their niece.

Often the Vicar and the trio from Meadow View would be guests at Southlands. In six weeks time the millionaire and his sister had established themselves as "intimate friends of Lady Fortescue."

They never presumed on this. They never intruded at Southlands without being invited. They seemed always desirous of keeping themselves in the background; but before Meadow View had been occupied two months Lady Fortescue had adopted Mrs. Ainslie as her greatest friend and adviser, while Sir John and Mr. White were well-nigh inseparable, and the Baronet never hesitated in telling anyone his tenant was "the best fellow in the world."

Under the millionaire's auspices Sir John became a shareholder in several companies. Notably, one connected with some Australian gold mines, which were guaranteed by Mr. White to contain more of the precious metal than any other mines ever discovered.

"I don't quite see the use of it," said Lady Fortescue, a little sadly, when Sir John assured her he was on the high-road to becoming a millionaire as well as his friend; "we always had enough before, and you know, John, there is no one to come after us."

"My dear, there's Ivy!"

"Ivy has riches enough already. More would only be an encumbrance to her. John, there is something I want very much to ask you!"

"Ask away, my dear. I don't think, Lucy, you can suddenly have become afraid of me at this late time of day?"

"Oh, no; but I thought it would hurt you! It has to do with our own disappointment."

He understood then, for there was one cross in their happy lot. There was no child to inherit the Baronetcy, and the broad lands of the Fortescues.

"Ask away, my dear," he repeated, gently; "and be sure I will answer you."

"Jack; when you and I are gone who will be master here?"

"I don't know."

"Jack!"

"I never troubled very much about the subject, Lucy. I always thought Ivy could inherit all I had, but I find, on talking things over with that good fellow, White, the little maid can take nothing but my personal property and savings—Southlands and Meadow View, the furniture, plate, and jewels. The income must go with the title to my heir-at-law."

"And who is that?"

"My dear, I told you before I had not the slightest idea. I was an only child, and so was my father before me. My grandfather had a brother, who went to Australia—married, and had several children. No doubt some of these young people from the Antipodes can make good their claims to the property, but I hate the thought of it. Why should a cousin I have never seen come before Ivy, who all these years has been like my own daughter?"

Lady Fortescue sighed.

"I am glad I have asked you."

"Why, my dear?"

"I don't know! Only, Jack, if Ivy leaves us I should like to find out your heir, and bring him home."

"I don't think Ivy will leave us at present

Lucy. The child has a mind of her own, and has set that mind fairly against matrimony. The Earl of Carrington rode over only last week to seek a countess, but the child would not even see him. She made me take the task of refusal off her shoulders."

"Lord Carrington! I am sorry."

"And so am I. He is a good young man, Lucy. I told him all!"

"Was that wise?"

"I thought it best."

"And did it change his views?"

"Not in the least. I liked his answer. It was so manly. 'Give me your niece, Sir John, and whatever trouble threatens her I will avert if love and honour can. No Countess of Carrington shall have had a happier home than Ivy's, if only she will let me call her my wife!'"

"And she would not listen?"

"No."

"Did you try to persuade her?"

"I did"—ruefully. "Knowing our fears for her I urged her to think of the Earl, whose position would make her secure from all innuendos. Of course I could not speak openly, and the child took up the notion I wanted to get rid of her. You should have seen her face, Lucy. Her eyes flashed like fire. She looked like some little offended princess."

"If you are tired of me, uncle John, I will go and live with my godfather at the Vicarage. I would work for my own living, or beg my bread from door to door, rather than marry against my wishes."

"Then it is quite settled?"

"Quite."

"It seems a pity."

"So I thought. White says it is a good thing. With her beauty and fortune, Ivy might be a duchess."

Lady Fortescue's face flushed.

"Surely you never consulted Mr. White about Ivy's prospects?"

"I happened to be talking to him, my dear, and he just asked me whether she was to be Lady Carrington."

"Very impertinent."

"He did not mean it so, I assure you, Lucy. He takes the warmest interest in Ivy. He says Carrington was not man enough to appreciate her, and seemed really relieved when I told him the Earl had received his *congé*."

"Perhaps Mr. White thinks he has mind enough to appreciate her," said my lady, petulantly. "I know you like the man, Jack; but surely you would never let him aspire to Ivy?"

"He has no wish to, Lucy. He is not a marrying man."

Lady Fortescue relented.

"I remember Janet told me so. She alluded to some weary disappointments. I must say Mr. White does not look to me as if he had been crossed in love."

"He has failed to win the only woman he cared for, and has had to witness her misery with the man she preferred to him. This explains his interest in Ivy."

"I don't see how."

"It was her mother, dear."

"Her mother! Nell?"

"It seems he was at Rome. He did not speak then, because poor Carew had only just died. Then he lost sight of her. When he found her it was too late."

"Poor fellow!"

"He only told me yesterday. His sole object in coming here was to see her child."

"And marry her."

"No—and judge if there was anything he could do for her. It seems he saw Nell after the marriage, and she made him promise to befriend her child. Not a word of this to Ivy. Only, Lucy, don't let your thoughts wander on White as a possible lover for the girl. He feels a fatherly interest in her, that's all."

"Why did he not tell us before?"

"He feared to reopen an old wound."

"Jack!"

"Yes."

"If he saw Nell afterwards he must have seen him!"

"He did, often."

"Well?"

"He would not speak of him; said the subject was too full of pain!"

"But surely you asked him?"

"Asked him what?"

"Whether the man was dead!"

"I had no need. He told me himself he was at the funeral. The man died three years after poor Helen. He was at a very low ebb, and picking up a living—or rather existing—at gaming-tables at Homburg. So you see, Lucy, we have nothing to fear for our darling. The dark shadow we used to think pursued her can never light on her golden head. Ivy is free!"

"I always told you he was dead!" said Lady Fortescue; "you know I did!"

"I know you always said so, but still it must be a great relief to you to know it."

It may seem unreasonable of Lady Fortescue, but she was quite unconscious of the relief her husband considered she ought to be feeling.

A simple woman, not given to needless anxiety, she had decided, once and for all in her own mind, that the destroyer of her sister's peace was dead.

She could not feel more sure about it from learning that George White had witnessed his funeral.

Meanwhile where was Ivy, the girl in whom the fondest hopes, the dearest plans of Sir John and his wife, were centred?

Ivy Carew, whose parents have had such a chequered history, whom peril surely threatened, and who had just refused the title of Countess, where was she?

It was a lovely afternoon for October. The sun shone almost with summer warmth, and Ivy had taken her sketch-book to a lonely spot in the Southlands grounds, and was busy making a picture of Meadow View, whose red turrets rose in the distance.

Very, very lovely she looked in her blue velvet dress and fur cape, and she worked out her sketch with no mean skill, but her thoughts were not all about art.

She could hear a footstep in the distance she had learned to know too well, and the colour deepened in her cheeks as it came nearer and nearer, until at last Paul Beresford stood before her.

"Busy, charming Miss Carew? What a pretty picture you are making of the old place? I wish I could sketch."

"Can you not?"

He shook his head.

"The only arts I know anything of, are music and literature. The last is my dearest ambition. I cannot remember the time when I did not long to make my mark as an author before I die."

"Do not speak of death," said the girl, quickly. "Everything looks so bright and fair; all around is so beautiful. Mr. Beresford, you must not speak of death."

"You see the world through rose-coloured spectacles, Miss Carew," he said quickly. "All looks bright to you because you are happy."

"And are not you happy? Oh! forgive me," and she blushed crimson. "I ought not to have asked such a question."

"Why not?"

"It was rude."

"I did not think it so; it sounded as though you felt some slight interest in me—as though we were friends."

Ivy raised her beautiful eyes, and looked into his face. Something she saw there made them droop.

"I should like us to be friends," she whispered, "and you will tell me what is troubling you, for I am sure there is something."

"I am going away."

The cloudless sky seemed to darken then for Ivy. The clear blue heaven seemed to cloud over, leaving the world beneath cold and bleak, and desolate. Her own face looked white and

set. She dropped her pencil, and seemed as one smitten with a sudden chill.

"Going away?"

"It is very sudden and unexpected," said Paul, simply. "Mr. White has found me a position far more lucrative than the one I fill here, and I have to enter on its duties next week."

"Then you will not come back?"

"I fear not."

A long silence.

"And are you glad?"

"I am glad and sorry!"

"Glad?"

"When a man has his way to make in the world, Miss Carew, he ought to rejoice at any change that puts him a step on Fortune's ladder."

"I never thought you cared for money?"

"I do not; and yet I am forced to forgo the great desire of my life—forced to give up all hope of the one thing I covet just because I am not rich."

"What is it?"

"I cannot tell you."

"You said just now that we were friends. Friends trust each other."

"I cannot tell you this."

"You will not."

"Miss Carew, Ivy, have pity on me. I am going away next week. We may never meet again. Do not let us part in anger."

"It is your fault that we part at all."

"Ivy!"

"Of course it is," said Miss Carew, with the most trying plain-spokenness. "You have a very comfortable appointment under Mr. White. You enjoy a nice income, and quite as much money as you ought to spend; but you have set your heart on something that costs a mint of money, and so you throw over Mr. White and Meadow View and your friends to go London, and make haste to get rich. I am disappointed in you, Mr. Beresford. I hate money, and can't understand anyone caring for it."

"I don't care for it."

"You said just now—"

"Listen," he said, passionately, taking one of her slim white hands in his, and looking with intense love into her eyes. "I had never meant to speak, Heaven knows. I thought to go away bravely, and bury my misery in my own breast; but after what you have said I must, in self-defence, tell you why I regret my poverty."

"I don't want to know!"

"But you will hear? I would be content to live out all my days in poverty, Miss Carew, if that were all; but a man dreams of a home, a wife—a someone infinitely dearer than himself to share his very thought, his every joy. Lately there has come before me a vision of what life might have been to me had I but possessed a moderate share of wealth. I saw her—her I would so gladly have made my life's queen. To see her was to love her, but she is rich, and I am poor. I ask you, Miss Carew, what honourable course is left me but to go away and fight my hardest in life's battlefield?"

"Without telling her?"

"What use would it be to tell her? Do you think I don't know the barrier between my poverty and her riches?"

"She must be a hateful young woman. At least, you evidently think so!" said Ivy, maliciously pretending she believed he was speaking of some unknown beauty.

"She is an angel."

"And yet you seem sure she's so fond of money that she cares for nothing else? I have plenty of money myself," said Miss Carew, demurely, "and I think it's an odious thing—perfectly horrible; but there, I am not an angel!"

"Ivy!"

"You had better call me Miss Carew. You see, Mr. Beresford, the 'angel' might disprove of your saying Ivy."

"I believe you are laughing at me."

"I am not!"

"Look at me."

But she would not obey him; instead, she turned away. Paul came to the other side, and saw the tears glistening in her eyes.

"You are sorry for me—just a little?"

"I am not!"

"At least you are not angry at my presumption?" How could she? "Thrown with you every day, how could I spend hours in your company without learning to love you?"

"You have managed it very cleverly."

"Ivy."

"And the angel will, doubtless, congratulate you warmly on your success."

"Ivy, can't you understand?"

"Perfectly."

"I believe I have loved you always," went on Paul, half brokenly, "from the moment I saw you stretched fainting on the grass. I have struggled with my love in vain; it has but grown deeper, stronger; but still I should never have had the courage to cut the knot of my misfortunes, and leave you. I loved you so, I believed I could keep my affection a secret, locked in my own heart, and it was happiness only to see you—and so I lingered."

"Until fortune and Mr. White together recalled you to London."

"Ivy!"

"Forgive me."

"I lingered, until the news came that you were to be Lady Carrington, when I could bear it no longer. I spoke to White. He is not a bad sort of fellow, and I think he guessed something of what I was suffering, for he obtained me this appointment, and waived all notice. It is hard to leave St. Arran's, and give up these meetings with you. But, oh! Ivy, my life's love, my darling, the one woman I delight in, I shall at least be spared the agony of hearing your wedding bells. I shall not have to look on with a bleeding heart at Lord Carrington's bride."

"You will never hear my wedding bells, I admit," remarked Miss Carew; "but I think you would have accomplished that exemption as well here as in London, since—I never mean to marry. As to your not seeing Lord Carrington's bride, I should think the Earl (and he's sure to marry soon) would be as likely to take his countess to London as to shut her up in the country."

"Ivy!"

"You have said that before, and I told you not."

"Do you think it's generous to torture me, Miss Carew?"

"Do you think it generous to grudge the Earl of Carrington a wife?"

"Yes, if that wife be the one woman I coveted as my own."

"But it isn't. I doubt if he even knows your angel. In fact, the Countess of Carrington is not yet selected, for the Earl told me, when he said good-bye this morning, that he should never return to England until he brought home his wife, and that my friendship would be the first he should seek for."

Mr. Beresford's eyes danced.

"Then—"

"That was all," said Miss Carew, demurely; "and please don't talk against the future countess, for Lord Carrington has been like a brother to me all my life, and for his sake I mean to love his wife dearly."

"But White told me you were to be that wife yourself."

"He made a mistake."

"And—"

"And though from your words I fancy you think all rich people mercenary, I assure you I am not nearly so fond of money as you and—angel. And I think it is cruelly hard on a girl to be an heiress, since it seems to shut her out from all chance of love."

"Ivy, you know my secret now. You are the angel I desired for my life's sunshine! It was to spare myself the pain of seeing you another's I resolved to go to London."

"I don't think you will ever see me another's, Mr. Beresford. You see, according to your creed, I ought to marry someone just as rich as myself. The Earl was decidedly

richer. It will be difficult to find anyone whose income matches to a penny, and then—I don't believe in marriages."

"Nor in love?"

"In love—yes."

"I love you, Ivy!"

"Yes!"

"And if only I were rich I believe I would teach you to love me back again."

She shook her head.

"I am sure you couldn't."

"Why not?"

"Because I have learned the lesson already. I think," and her eyes drooped, "I have loved you ever since the day you risked your life for mine."

Silence! He was holding her hand in both of his; a strange, sweet sense of rapture was in both their hearts. The girl was the first to awake to life's reality.

"And you are going to London next week, Mr. Beresford?"

"I wish I wasn't," said Paul, gloomily; "but it really is a capital opening, and—"

"You want to make a fortune."

"It is no use. I should be years in making it, and then it would not be worthy of you."

She took his hand with a new strange humility, which sat sweetly on her.

"I don't believe you love me."

"Not love you!"

"You love your pride better."

"I cannot bear to be thought a fortune-hunter, Ivy."

"I don't believe," said Miss Carew, mendaciously, "you will have a chance of being called one. I never took the trouble to inquire particularly, but I believe all my father's property is so settled that I can never touch a penny of it, but only just spend so much every year; and, Paul, if it made you unhappy we could just let that money be, and live on what you earned. I'm afraid I am rather extravagant, but I would try to learn economy for your sake."

He stooped and kissed her. Love had conquered pride. From that morning Ivy knew nothing but death could really part her and Paul.

"I must speak to Sir John," said Beresford, at last. "My darling, I am afraid he will be very angry."

"He was never angry with me in his life, Paul, and he always liked you."

"But after expecting Lord Carrington as a nephew, don't you think he will have set his heart on a title for you?"

"I am not afraid of Uncle John. He and Auntie always give me my own way. It is not them I fear."

"Who then, sweetheart?"

"Mr. White."

Like lightning Paul remembered his first visit to St. Arran's, and the millionaire's inquiries about Miss Carew. An instant told him Ivy was right—if trouble came to them Mr. White would have a hand in it; but he only said,—

"He has no earthly right to interfere in your affairs, my darling!"

"None; but he is uncle's friend, and has gained a great influence over him. Besides, Paul—bend your head down, I want to whisper—I have a great dread of Mr. White. I can't explain it to you; I have tried in vain to reason it away. The moment I saw him I felt he would work me some terrible injury; and all these weeks, though he has shown me nothing but kindness, the presentiment is unchanged. Even at night in my dreams I seem to hear a voice crying out, 'Beware of Mr. White; never trust him.'"

(To be continued.)

FOLLY consists in the drawing of false conclusions from just principles, by which it is distinguished from madness, which draws just conclusions from false principles.

TWICE CHOSEN.

—o:—

CHAPTER XVI.—(Continued.)

WHEN he did find her it was in a state of almost poverty; her daughter was with her, her constant nurse and companion.

Mrs. D'Aroy had been no mean artist as an amateur, and she had supported herself and her child at first with but small difficulty.

But the long hours of labour, the loss of brightness in her life, the poorer fare, the confinement, soon told upon her health.

She was too proud to apply to her husband to help her, by whom she had not stood in her younger days, nor had she his address, save that of the club to which she had directed in days gone by.

She did not know of his long residence at Lyneston, as the Earl's secretary.

She and Rosamond occupied two small rooms in a pretty cottage at Richmond, and the girl now went to London with her mother's paintings, which grew fewer and fewer as her strength gradually diminished.

When Lord Lyneston arrived at Jasmine Cottage he was over fatigued, and his sad revelation made, the invalid had to bestir herself to wait upon him, for Rosamond was out.

When the girl returned, she thought the old man so ill that she went for a doctor, who said he must be put to bed at once, and carefully watched, for he was threatened with apoplexy.

Here was a terrible position for the D'Aroys. Rosamond carried their trouble to their kind landlady, who offered to give up her own airy bedroom to his lordship, and to help the girl to wait upon him; and there Lord Lyneston had to remain for a week, his household in a state of dismay at his unusual absence.

No apoplexy intervened; it was staved off by the doctor's careful treatment, and the old man went home.

But he could not forget Mrs. D'Aroy and her beautiful young daughter, and before a month had elapsed, he wrote a formal proposal for fair Rosamond's hand, at the same time offering her mother a home at Lyneston. He had taken a fancy to the bright-faced girl, and thought this would be the best way to help them.

His offer was at once gladly accepted.

Love was a sealed book to Rosamond D'Aroy. She had had to toil early and late, and it seemed to her that a life of ease and pleasure would be Paradise.

The price she had to pay for it appeared nothing until her wedding-day; then her heart spoke—her womanhood cried out. She shrank from the future before her, and burning tears ran down her pale cheeks, for she knew that she was selling herself for this world's goods—knew that she had no love for the old man whom she must henceforth call husband.

But she drove back these natural feelings, and became Lady Lyneston, and she and her mother settled down in comfort in the beautiful home which was to have been Cecil Egerton's.

There was to be no more toil now, no more drudgery, no more poverty, but the change had come too late for Mrs. D'Aroy. She lived to see Lord and Lady Lyneston's little boy, and then faded away, being united to the husband in death, with whom she had elected not to remain in life.

Rosamond had made the old man a good and patient wife and nurse.

He was too infirm to take her out into the world, as she had hoped and dreamed, and well it was for her that such was the case.

With her dazzling beauty and youth, it was scarcely likely that her warm young heart would not have claimed some other kindred one for its own; and in a mind like hers the struggle between love and duty would have been a fearful ordeal for the young wife to pass through.

In her quiet and beautiful home, with her

bonnie boy to interest and amuse her, she was at peace and content; not pining for pleasures which she had never known. And there she remained for three more years, when the doctors ordered his lordship to a warmer climate.

They travelled from place to place, but even the air of Italy and Switzerland cannot rejuvenate, and the man of medicine knew that the beginning of the end had begun.

Lord Lynstone wished to die in his ancestral halls, but the homeward journey was pronounced to be too much for him; but his desire grew even more urgent, and it was decided that his removal should be attempted as soon as his nephew arrived, and he reached Mentone upon the same day as Sir Richard Freemantle and his party; whereas Lord Carruthers, who had travelled more quickly, had been already a couple of days on the spot, and had been devoting his time to making various arrangements for the comfort and pleasure of his friends from Marsden Hall.

Among other things he determined to procure some flowers to get placed in Adela's and Lilian's rooms, which he felt he could easily manage through the servants.

When at the florist's, he was strangely struck at the beauty of a lady who was choosing the fairest blossoms she could obtain, which he heard her say were for an invalid.

When she went away he inquired who the beautiful girl was, and learnt that this was Lord Lynstone's young wife, so soon, as all the world knew, to become a widow; and a great pity for her filled his mind. He seemed obliged to think of her, compelled to it by the force of her great beauty.

And he found himself asking, again and again, whether by any possibility this fair young creature could love the infirm old man with whom she was mated? and his own heart answered "No," emphatically.

Lord Carruthers' flowers were duly admired by Adela and Lilian upon their arrival, but one was as innocent as the other as to whose kindness they were indebted for them.

They found by the local paper, in the visitors' list, that he had arrived before them, and he left his card upon the first evening, with his address, and made inquiries for them after their journey; but delicacy prevented his breaking in upon their privacy so soon.

When Cecil Egerton reached the beautiful villa in which his uncle had taken up his abode, he saw at once the desire to go home had come upon him too late. He had a long and earnest talk with the dying man, who retained his faculties clear to the end.

He heard from his own lips the whole history of his marriage, and understood the significance of the fact that the young widow, countess though she was, had scarcely a friend in the world; and his uncle pointed out to Cecil what a prize she would be, with her beauty and wealth, and how many adventurers would be about her path, to whom she might fall an easy prey, from her innocence and ignorance of the ways of the world.

And Cecil promised to do the best he could to shield and advise her; also undertaking the guardianship of the little lordling, and Lord Lynstone lay very quiet with his feeble hand in the strong one of his nephew.

"Rosamond," he said, as she entered the room. "It is too late!"

"What is too late, dear?" she asked, sorrowfully, kneeling by his side, and looking tenderly into his drawn face.

"Too late to return home. But you will bury me there, Cecil? My bones would not rest in a strange place."

"I will respect your wishes in all ways, my dear uncle," he replied kindly.

"Rosamond," continued Lord Lynstone, "when I am gone you must look to Cecil for advice and guidance. If you are in any difficulty, my child, appeal to him. He will help you, for my sake!"

"I shall not forget," she answered softly.

"She has been a gentle wife, Cecil; and remember, I am not selfish enough to wish her

to spend her life alone. She is young, and will, I hope, some day marry suitably. But, Rosamond, if you have any doubt as to the fitness of your choice, consult Cecil, and recollect that he was your husband's only relation."

Tears filled the sweet blue eyes, and words rose to her lips, springing from a tender heart.

She was trying to tell her dying lord that no other should take his place, but he stopped her.

"Hush! my darling! I will listen to no such promises. I will not permit you to make them. Who knows what the future may hold for you? Remember I wish you to be happy! Now, kiss me, child, and let me sleep."

She obeyed him, and she and Cecil sat there watching, listening to the laboured breathing.

The doctor came, but did not disturb him. He called Cecil on one side, and told him he would probably pass away in his sleep, and he was right.

Cecil went to the young widow's side, and taking her hand, tried to lead her from the room.

"Let me stay," she pleaded. "I cannot leave him!"

"My dear," he answered, gently. "The end was indeed, peaceful. He has left you!"

"No, no," she answered, in an awed voice. "He cannot be dead!"

She leant over him. He breathed no more.

Then she stooped and kissed him, weeping the while, and let Cecil take her from the chamber.

That evening Cecil went out upon various matters in connection with his uncle's death, and to make arrangements for the conveyance of his body to England; and as he stood within one of the shops, he heard a voice which made his heart stand still, and saw a tall slight figure pass in company with another girl.

Sir Richard and Horace were in front of them, but he did not perceive them. His whole attention was taken up by Adela and Lilian, both of whom he recognized.

The former was looking bright and happy, as well as the latter, for they were expressing their satisfaction at the good terms which had begun to exist between Sir Richard and Horace.

Had Adela turned round, she would have seen her lover watching her. As it was, the carriage was awaiting them at the end of the next street, and as soon as they reached the corner they got in and drove off. So when Cecil made up his mind to follow them, they were no longer visible, nor could he understand what had become of them.

Suddenly he looked up, and saw the publishing shop, where the list of visitors was printed; but upon application for one he found it would not be out till the following morning.

But the transfer of a heavy coin from Cecil's pocket to that of the salesman, brought the offer of the names and addresses of any of the new arrivals he might wish to know about, and he left the office with the information that Miss Thorndyke was staying at Greenholme with Sir Richard Freemantle and his family; and that night Adela's *espionage* face chased away the sweet, sad one of Lady Lynstone, and even that of the dead Earl himself, and by morning Cecil had made up his mind to call and see Adela—see for himself whether he was forgotten, or if the light of love would ever again shine from her beautiful eyes for him.

He had been wildly, madly jealous. Reason was crushed out of his mind by the stronger feeling.

Every mail he had expected to hear that the woman he loved was betrothed to another, and that other was Lord Carruthers; but no such news reached him.

The last he had heard of her was that she had gone to Marsden Hall to help Lilian nurse her father, so he was not greatly sur-

prised to find her, even at Mentone, in their company.

He still loved her with every pulse of his exacting heart. She was just as needful to his happiness as ever.

If he could once see her, he should soon know whether she had shut him from her love.

One moment he told himself it was no wonder if she had done so, for she was a proud girl, and he had left her with scarce a word.

The next he fiercely repeated that there was no other course open to him, as he had assured himself at Winethorpe, and over and over again since that sad day when her self-will and his mistrust had wrecked their joint happiness.

Sleep would not come to him. Restlessly he paced his chamber, impatient for the morning, that he might present himself at Greenholme; and before noon he stood with his hand upon the latch of the gate, with a wildly-beating heart.

The path up to the house by which he entered the grounds was not the carriage drive, but wound among beautiful shrubs and ferns, being almost at times hidden from view.

As he followed it, going towards the house, Adela's voice came to him, and he stopped with a sudden longing to see her unseen, and peered through the leafy screen.

She was sitting under the verandah, and advancing in her direction across the lawn, was a tall fair young man.

Cecil Egerton's heart stood still. The blood then surged with a mad rush through his veins.

He clenched his powerful right hand, and dug his heel savagely into the gravel path.

"Dela," said the fair man, "which will you have—red or white?"

"Oh, white for me!" she answered, with a bright smile, looking up at him.

"Roses red and roses white,
As if pale with love's despair,
As if pale with love's despair,"

he sang, as he handed it to her.

"A great deal you know of love's despair, you old rascal!" she laughed.

"I should have known it, Scamp, but for you," he returned, earnestly. "You have been my good angel."

"A wingless one, I fear," she retorted.

"And now see—I have no pin."

"But I have. You perceive that I'm not an engaged man for nothing; every lover should be made to carry pins for his lady's needs. Here you are, Dela, or better still, let me put it on for you. I'm getting quite an expert at that sort of thing already."

Adela rose from her chair, and willingly allowed Horace to pin on the roses he had given her.

There was no reserve, no shyness between these two; there was not the least consciousness, nor the faintest fear of their misunderstanding each other.

But Major Egerton misunderstood them. The old jealousy was raging in his breast.

"That man again—curse him!" he muttered, through his clenched teeth.

"Let her have him—he is a better match than I shall ever be!" he added, bitterly, "and she knows it," and he turned away with uneven steps, going out again by the gate he had entered with so light a heart, heavy enough now—heavy as lead.

It was agony to him to see her accept love gifts from another, to watch him pin them upon her shoulder with a lover's freedom, to hear him say she had saved him from despair, to listen to his opinion as to his own improvement as her lady's-maid, since his engagement to her.

Every word entered his very soul, and quivered there like a barbed and poisoned arrow.

He had told himself from month to month

that it was all over between them, but never with such dead certainty as now.

She was engaged to another. Horace's own words had been the funeral-knell of all his hopes.

He looked ten years older when he once more entered the villa of his dead uncle. Lady Lynestone gazed at him in wonder, questioned him as to whether he was ill; but Cecil was not the man to appreciate the prettiest woman's sympathy, if she were not the one woman in the world for him.

So he forced himself to talk to her of the funeral arrangements, earnestly persuading her to remain at Mentone with her boy, while he went to England with his sad charge, and saw his uncle laid to rest among his ancestors.

"If you say it is right, Cecil, it must be so," she answered, "for my dear lord bade me trust you."

So Cecil asked a few people whom he knew to be kind to the gentle young widow until his return, and set out upon his melancholy journey.

His path and Adela's had again met and diverged, and she little guessed how near she had been to having her lover at her feet once more.

CHAPTER XVII.

"COULD NOT GIVE YOU LOVE FOR LOVE."

As Cecil Egerton listlessly ran his eye over the list of visitors at Mentone, he was not in the least surprised to see the name of Lord Carruthers among them, and he crushed the paper with an impatient hand, and flung it aside.

At one moment he decided to go to Winsthorpe, and upbraid his old friend the Rector for not letting him know the truth about Adela.

The next he saw the absurdity of such a step.

"He had never, by word or look, taken Mr. Thorndyke into his confidence, and how could he expect it in return from him, or sympathy either?"

On the contrary, the Rector would be rejoicing in the engagement, which, to him, meant lifelong loneliness; for well he knew that Adela's place in his heart could never be taken by another.

Perhaps his old friend had even laid pressure upon his child, to persuade her to accept this good match, which he had himself so ardently desired.

Not that Adela could have needed much persuasion, he thought bitterly. She had seemed perfectly at home with the handsome young fellow who was familiarly fastening roses upon her dress.

Well! there was little wonder. He was in youth's pride and prime; he was rich, and affluent; while he, Cecil Egerton, was but a soldier of fortune, a major in a marching regiment, with his best years already passed.

The train whirled him along through France, his mind excited and sad.

Would Adela have married him if he had now been Lord Lynestone?

He asked himself the question again and again, one moment, loyal in his rejection of the thought that riches or station would have altered her conduct one jot or tittle; the next, recklessly believing this, or any other evil of her.

England was reached at last.

It was not two years since he had visited Lynestone—his uncle's guest.

Now, he was accompanying all that remained on earth of the Earl back to the home he had loved.

He had lived honoured and respected, and had died at a good old age, respected still, leaving a wife to mourn his loss—at any rate, for a little space—and a hostage to fortune in the shape of his merry, blue-eyed boy—now Lord Lynestone.

And Cecil, his acknowledged heir for so

many years, was not to reign in the old place in his stead.

There was a large gathering to pay the last tribute to the dead man.

No plumes or black draperies were to be seen at the Earl's funeral. No black hearse, or mourning coaches.

But there was a procession of well-appointed, private carriages following the catafalque, which reached from the mansion to the chapel in the park, which, although in reality a private one, was thrown open on Sundays for the people of Lynestone to worship in.

There the family vault was.

In the middle of the chancel stood a rarely beautiful monument, upon which the gold-hued glass windows threw a seeming glory.

Four angels carved in white marble were guarding it, one at either corner, and the names of the Lynestones, from the days of the Saxon kings, were graven upon it.

Facing the altar was a door by which descent was made to the spacious vault below, in which those of this ancient family rested, who had died at home in peace, while the bones of many had bleached upon battle-fields, and some had known only a watery grave.

Among his ancestors they laid the departed Earl, his coffin laden with white blossoms, and turned each man to his own home, save those who were invited to be present at the reading of the will.

There were the usual legacies to old family retainers, and instructions as to various favourite horses.

Cecil Egerton was to receive twenty thousand pounds, as a mark of his uncle's affection, and was appointed his boy's sole guardian from the age of twelve to eighteen, when he was to be permitted to judge for himself of his future; but was recommended still to act under his guardian's advice.

To Rosamond, his Countess, the Earl left the sum of fifty thousand pounds absolutely; which she was to retain in the event of her marrying again.

She was to live at Lynestone, if she desired it, should she remain a widow until her son married, upon which event taking place, she was to inhabit the Dowry House upon the borderland of the Park.

The rents, &c., were to be allowed to accumulate as much as possible during the young Earl's minority, and the Countess was lovingly entreated to confer with Cecil Egerton, the Earl's loved and respected nephew, upon all matters of importance.

All that he could leave to his wife and to Cecil he had done. The rest was entailed property.

When all had been arranged at Lynestone, Major Egerton hesitated.

Should he fulfil his half-made promise to go to Winsthorpe or no? and he decided in the negative.

He felt he could not bear to hear his old friends there speak of the coming wedding of the girl he loved so dearly.

So a few lines informed Mr. Thorndyke that press of business would prevent his paying them his talked-of visit, as he must return to Mentone to arrange matters for his young widowed aunt; but he purposely omitted to mention his address there, as he did not wish the Rector to write to him.

The consequence was he immediately penned a line to Adela, and told her that Cecil Egerton would be in Mentone again almost as soon as his letter could reach her.

Knowing nothing of his last fatal mistake, the girl let hope once more grow in her heart.

If he should return, and ask her again for an explanation of what he had been unable to understand, or she then to tell him, how gladly would she reveal what had at that time been her friend's secret.

Now, Cecil and all the world might know who her fair and handsome gentleman visitor had been, and why she had met him as she had done.

The love-letter would be explained; the

bogie of Lord Carruthers being her lover, would be blown to the four winds, and she?

Might she not be Cecil Egerton's once more? Would he not ask her again to be his wife? Would he not open his arms for her to nestle upon his breast? and should she not hear his heart beat true to her?

She was alone in her chamber thinking, and she held out her hands with a glad cry, as though he were there to clasp them.

She felt that he was coming, that he was not a great way off! If once they met, all would be explained.

She never even asked herself whether he loved her still. It never struck her to doubt his loyalty. She believed him to be as incapable of changing as herself.

A misunderstanding had parted them, not want of love.

She had almost forgotten his lack of trust, in her visions of a reconciliation. She was restless, and changeable in her moods. Even Horace and Lilian could not make her out. Gay as a skylark one moment, the next wrapped in thoughtful reflection, singing a snatch of a song, playing some bars of a piece, and suddenly stopping; her book lying idle upon her lap, or read by jerks. She seemed always to be listening; listening for Cecil.

But days passed slowly by, and he never came.

Sir Richard was once more himself again, and he and Adela took daily walks together, while Horace and Lilian wandered in the country, side by side, avoiding the haunts of men; too happy in each other's company to desire further companionship. Sir Richard, on the contrary, liked to look about, and see the people, and the shops, so he and Adela went often to the more frequented parts.

About a week after she had heard from her father that Cecil was at Mentone she saw him, and he saw her.

He was in Lady Lynestone's open carriage, sitting by her side, with the little lord upon his knee.

His eyes met hers coldly, and he merely raised his hat as the carriage dashed past with its fast-stepping bays.

"Who is that, my dear?" queried the Baronet, looking after the retreating vehicle.

For the moment she was speechless, all the blood seemed to have congealed in her veins. She had seen her lover again. Her soul had gone out to him, and he had passed her with cold courtesy.

She heard her old friend's question in a dazed way. Then she knew that he had repeated it. The earth seemed to have retreated beneath her feet.

She felt faint and ill, but she aroused herself with an effort.

Her strong will once more asserted itself, and she answered, in a firm voice,—

"Major Egerton; you know he is an old friend of papa's."

"To be sure, though I have never seen him before, but he recognized you, my dear, and he will be certain to look you up. When he comes, Adela, make him understand that your father's friends are mine; and that he will be welcome at my house. He must come and dine with us."

"You are very kind," she answered simply, for she knew not what to say.

Her vision had been blown away by one glance from Cecil's cold eyes.

There was not even surprise in them. She saw that he knew perfectly that she was in the place, and he had laid down his line of conduct towards her beforehand.

He knew that she was there, and he had not sought her.

"And who was the lady, my dear?" continued the Baronet. "She was a very pretty woman, and young to be a widow."

"Yes, she was really beautiful," said Adela, freely. "I think she must be Lady Lynestone, his uncle's widow. You will remember that when Lord Carruthers dined with us a day or two ago he was speaking of her as one of

the sweetest-looking women he had ever seen."

"Ah! I recollect now, and she deserved his praise. Widows are fascinating little creatures, and Carruthers had better take care of his heart," and Sir Richard looked searchingly in her face.

"It is early days to be finding her a new husband," she said, somewhat reproachfully, "even though hers was believed to be only a *marriage de convenance*; but if she is as sweet as she looks, when a right time has elapsed, Lord Carruthers might do far worse than become her second husband."

"And would none of his fair friends grieve at his desertion?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Who can tell? One thing I do know, I should not be one of them."

He remained in thought, then spoke suddenly,—

"A *marriage de convenance* was it? Yes, yes, I suppose so. There must be some strong motive to induce summer to waste its bright days upon winter. It was not likely she loved him; was it, Adela?"

"You have asked me a question I cannot answer; I never saw the late earl."

"But, generally speaking, such love would not be likely, or possible."

"Not likely, but certainly possible."

"You think so, my dear?" he said, looking at her with interest.

"It would not be like the love of two young hearts, perhaps; but I think a girl might be very fond of an old man, if he were what he ought to be, ripened in goodness with his years."

"There are not many such, my child. Ah! here comes Carruthers."

Then he turned to his Lordship.

"We have just seen your widow," he laughed, "and a lovely little woman she is; but there was a good-looking fellow already in possession."

"Indeed, so soon? Who may I ask?"

"Major Egerton; he's a friend of Miss Thorn-dyke's."

"Egerton! Why she's his aunt!"

"His aunt! she does not look like it."

"I should have said his uncle's widow. His marriage must have been a great disappointment to Major Egerton, for he didn't marry till he was seventy-five or six."

"Ten years my senior!" cried Sir Richard, "and married to a pretty young girl. Well! there is a chance for me yet—eh, Carruthers?"

"I shouldn't like you for a rival if you entered the lists with me," laughed Lord Carruthers; and then he added, mischievously, "perhaps Lady Lyneston would like another matured man, Sir Richard. Who knows?"

"Who indeed!" chuckled the Baronet, "but to tell the truth I looked upon you as her admirer, and was saying so to Miss Thorn-dyke as you came along."

Lord Carruthers coloured.

Although he had been thinking a good deal of the widow and her beauty, his affections were still Adela's, and it was far from pleasant for him to have such a suggestion made to her; and he longed for an opportunity to convince her that Lady Lyneston was nothing to him.

"You are very thoughtful, Sir Richard," he said in a nettled voice, "but rather precipitate, as I have not even yet been introduced to the lady in question."

The Baronet laughed.

He knew exactly what his Lordship felt. He had in fact laid the trap for him, for he had not yet quite put aside his idea of making Adela happy.

Lord Carruthers accompanied them home, and was invited by the Baronet to remain to dinner, so he sauntered to his hotel and dressed, and returned in plenty of time for that meal.

It was a beautiful evening, and the stars were shining overhead as bright as diamonds in the sky; and all but Sir Richard were tempted out into the garden.

"Go out, my dear," he said kindly to Adela.

"I have not seen you look so pale since you left England. You are as white as the privet flower."

"If I am as hardy I shall not hurt," answered Adela, with a sad smile.

"My dear, is anything the matter?" he asked, anxiously, looking at her heavy eyes.

"My head aches," she replied. "It is not much to talk about, is it?"

"The air will do it good, Adela; stay as long as you feel inclined. I shall take a nap most likely."

So she joined the other three, and they wandered about the grounds; she and Lord Carruthers in front. Suddenly she stopped, for Horace and Lillian were nowhere to be seen.

His Lordship had no mind to miss the opportunity which had been made for him, either by design or accident, and turned to her, the moonlight falling upon his refined, well-cut features.

"Adela," he said, softly, "I was most terribly vexed at what Sir Richard said to me to-day regarding Lady Lyneston."

"Yes, it is a mistake to make such speeches," she replied readily, "especially when they are made in reference to a recent widow. She would naturally be bitterly annoyed if she by chance heard of them; but of one thing you may rest assured, it was said thoughtlessly, and with no intention to give offence."

"All you say is quite right, Miss Thorn-dyke," he continued; "but you do not seem to understand the chief cause of my annoyance. I shame to say it was not delicacy for her ladyship's feelings."

"No?" she said, interrogatively.

"No; it was the fear you should believe that I could think of, or wish, any other woman for my wife except yourself! Adela," he went on earnestly. "I have loved you now more than three years. No other woman has been aught to me during that time. Your image has filled my heart to overflowing. I have loved you, and I love you still, with a deep and earnest affection. Adela! Adela! my dear girl, have you no kind thought for me? Do you continue indifferent as to my happiness?"

"Lord Carruthers, I am not indifferent to your happiness at all," she answered kindly; "and, indeed, nothing could give me more pleasure than to hear that you were thoroughly content with your life."

"Then, dear one, let me hope that you will give a different answer to my prayer from that I received at Winsthorpe. I cannot be happy without you!"

"You would not be so with me," she answered, sadly.

"Should I not?" he replied, in a low, passionate voice, drawing her to him. "Adela, give me a trial; see if my deep devotion cannot satisfy you! Oh! my love, you do not dream what you are to me."

"Perhaps not," she answered. "And yet I think I do understand."

"You cannot, or you would not torture me by your coldness!" he cried.

"I am not cold," she said, gently. "Indeed, I wish to be your friend; so much do I wish to be your friend that I will not shrink from giving myself cruel pain to prove it to you. Lord Carruthers, you will promise that what I say shall be sacred to you?"

"As sacred as my mother's honour," he replied, solemnly.

"I am satisfied," she said, half under her breath. Then she turned and placed her cold hand in his.

"Would you wish a wife to lie in your bosom with a heart wildly longing for another man's love? Would you wish her to evade your kiss, because it is not his? To shrink from your tender words because they do not fall from his lips? To know that every fibre of her nature quivers at his touch, trembles at his footfall? To realize that whatever worship you give her, she loves him more? That all your deep affection can give her no joy, no happiness; her happiness being centred in another? Would such a wife

make your comfort, my friend? Would you desire such an one for your life companion?"

"Heaven forbid!" he replied, earnestly.

"Then never again think of me as aught but a friend. I like you truly; my love is beyond your reach!"

"Adela, can this be true?" he queried, in a pained voice, "or are you trying to cure me of my love? Are you building up this barrier to drive me away? Nothing but the knowledge that you belong to another will silence me, rest assured."

"My heart is not mine to give," she said, sadly. "I might almost say 'I wish it were,' for your constancy touches me, and I believe you will be very good to the girl you marry; but I value your peace too much to accept your offer, knowing that I could not give you love for love—could not satisfy your large heart. Dear Lord Carruthers, seek some gentle woman who would make you a loving, yielding wife, and companion through life. I could not so wrong you as to take advantage of your devotion!"

"Adela," said his Lordship, with feeling. "You have been very good to me; I know that it has cost you dearly to tell me the truth, for I fear your choice has not been a happy one!"

"No, it has brought me much sorrow," she confessed, with trembling lips.

"Will you make me one promise, dear?" he asked.

"Yes, I can trust you."

"If ever you overcome this fancy, and feel you are free to love another, and capable of wifely affection, you will let me know."

"Do not think of it; it is not a fancy, it is the love of years!"

"Adela, it is impossible that you can love in vain if your lover is worthy of the name of man."

"He is worthy, believe me. I have no need to be ashamed of him," she said, warmly, "he is brave and true!"

"Do not ask me to suppose the fault is yours, Adela; I cannot do it."

"Believe that there was no fault at all, that circumstances placed me in a false light!"

"And he could not trust you! My dear, I would have stood by you against all the evidence the combined world could produce. Adela, I would to Heaven your passion for this other were not so great, that I might shelter you from sorrow and care; but, my dear, I could not bear it. Every time I saw a cloud upon your white brow I should feel that you were longing for him, and not for me. My soul would be torn with anguish," he added, brokenly.

"I know it," replied she, tenderly; "it would be so with every true man. My friend, you must live it down!"

"Yes! I must try and live it down; for the present I think I had better go away, and see whether your dear face will haunt me less elsewhere."

"You are quite right, Lord Carruthers, and when it is done, come back. Let the past, with its dead hopes, never be spoken of between us, and let us be fast friends."

"That is a compact," he answered, kindly. "And now Adela, good-night; I cannot go back among the others. They must have guessed my secret; no doubt they will understand."

"Good-night," she said, softly, "and believe that I am sorry to have given you pain!"

They clasped hands then warmly and firmly, and the night breeze seemed to take up her words, and to echo his sigh, as he parted from her, and went out into his life alone.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A LAST LOOK AT THE ROSE WENT.

The winter passed happily enough for all the *dramatis personæ* in our little life-drama.

To Horace and Lillian it brought unalloyed joy, to Sir Richard Freemantle peace and contentment; while Adela strove to enjoy the good things left to her, and to shut out from

her mind that ever painful theme, Cecil Egerton, and her love for him.

It was not an easy task.

Nay, it was an impossible one, but she hid her sufferings even from her dearest friends, and they thought her happy.

It was only when she was alone that her heart-weariness would at times overcome her, and break down the proud spirit which so bravely enabled her to hide her sorrow from an unsympathetic world, and sympathetic friends alike.

Lord Carruthers had been travelling from place to place, and visiting among his kinsfolk and acquaintance, and everywhere the man whom Adela had rejected was a welcome guest and favourite.

To say he had ceased to care for her would be erroneous, but he thought of her now with no hope—as a being beyond his reach.

He no longer intermingled her life with his in imagination, and was one step upon the road to a more healthy state of mind.

Bob Lake was going into the church, being "the fool of the family," as Scamp Thorndyke had told Cecil Egerton up in the old walnut tree years before; and he was now very good-naturedly doing the office work in his father's business, which usually fell to Horace's share.

He had a hero worship for his elder brother, and would have done even a more unpleasant thing for his benefit.

Tom, the youngest of the family, was now at Sandhurst, an embryo officer, and in his cadet state was eagerly longing for his commission, and greater independence.

Lady Lynstone truly sorrowed for the kind old man who had done so much for her, but it was not a sorrow without hope.

Friends had quickly rallied around her, and now, no longer tied by her wifely duties to the side of her invalid husband, she mixed in a quiet way in the society of her acquaintances, daily becoming more admired and sought after.

Sir Richard and his household, in the shape of Adela and Lilian, had called upon the gentle widow, and a warm affection sprang up between the three ladies; but it was from Sir Richard's lips that Lady Lynstone learnt that her late lord's nephew and Adela's father had been close friends—a fact which drew her still nearer to the girl.

But strange to say Major Egerton was never spoken of between them.

Perhaps with some subtle insight into that mysterious thing, a woman's heart, the young widow guessed that there was a place in that of her new-made friend, Adela, a holiest of holies, into which none were invited to enter, and that the image there enshrined was Cecil Egerton's.

True it is that after the few first chance mentions of his name, she avoided it, or spoke of him with averted eyes, lest she should seem to watch the sad white face of the listener.

She told Cecil, in one of her letters, that she had made Adela's acquaintance, and how much she liked her; but her communication was not commented upon, and she wrote of her friend no more.

She was not of an inquisitive or interfering nature, and had no wish to pry into the feelings of those who showed no desire to make a confidante of her.

Cecil Egerton was eating his heart out in silent misery.

He would have given much for the information which he was too proud to seek, or even to encourage.

He could scarcely repress the longing to know all the particulars of Adela's supposed engagement, and yet he shrank from her very name.

He was for ever saying to himself that he had put her outside his life, outside his love; but he left the door of his heart open, for her to creep back and nestle there.

Mrs. Thorndyke said little to her daughter of her father's state of health, and his own letters to her were cheery, and full of anti-

cipation of a bright meeting, and Adela let her fears rest.

But the heart of the Rector's wife became heavier day by day, with a growing fear, and the family doctor was graver than of yore, for his patient's strength diminished instead of increasing.

He was advised to try change of air, but he shook his head.

"Home," he said, "was the place for a sick man, and he would stay there," nor would he hear of help in his work, his desire being to "die in harness."

It came with a shock to Adela, upon her return, to find her father so much weaker, and his pale cheeks so thin, but she smiled still in his presence, and he in hers, each keeping up the deception of hope for the other's sake.

She did not remain at Marsden Hall at all, but went straight home, blaming herself for her long absence, which had kept her from her duties of love.

Robert Lake was ordained, and a little plot was laid between the Rector's friends to give him help in spite of himself, and Mr. Lake asked him as a personal favour to take his son as his curate.

He had a regard for the lad, and did not like to refuse, so the young man lived still with his parents, and lightened the Rector's work, doing the better from the fact that he felt all he did would save his senior, for whom he entertained a sincere esteem.

So the summer, to which Adela had looked forward, came, and was a bright one, but damped by her secret sorrow; and the new fear, which at first was only vague and shadowy, was now taking shape and form.

But still Mr. Thorndyke was cheerful and active as his strength would allow.

He never spoke of his approaching end except to his wife, and from her he had never hidden the truth.

He had not guessed his daughter's love for Cecil Egerton, but he saw that his hopes as regarded Lord Carruthers were at an end. He had thought that meeting in Mentone, and being then thrown together, it was more than probable that Adela might learn to enjoy his society, and from that might grow fond of him; but upon learning from Sir Richard of his abrupt disappearance from among them, he could no longer shut the truth from his mind.

There was little doubt that Adela had dismissed him again; and this opinion was shared by Sir Richard Freemantle, who was more at sea than ever to account for the trouble which he had at times surprised upon her face, the sorrow in her steadfast eyes.

When late autumn set in Mr. Thorndyke found himself obliged to give up his clerical duties; but Bob Lake now knew all his ways, and daily conferred with him in his study, following out all his wishes.

And his friends looked hopefully forward to the spring to see the Rector better; and carefully his wife and daughter nursed him through the winter months.

Snow lay deep upon the ground, but no cold reached him in his snug home.

The holly, and the mistletoe, and the kind wishes of all around him, told him that it was Christmastide, and it pleased him to receive visitors for a little time, only he soon grew tired of listening and speaking.

Sir Richard seemed to have outgrown his delicacy, and there was no need for him to go abroad for his health or for pleasure. He felt he could not do so, with so much anxiety among his dearest friends.

Many and many a talk these two had together, for it was the Baronet's daily custom to drive over to the Rectory, and it was the greatest enjoyment of his life.

He missed Adela in his home more than he would have cared to confess, and the peep at her every twenty-four hours seemed to bridge over the gap in his existence, occasioned by her absence.

Often and often he had it, *an bout des levres* to ask the Rector if he would approve of his adopting his daughter in the future;

but Mr. Thorndyke had never spoken to him of his near end, and Sir Richard was waiting for him to broach the subject, which he hoped he would one day do, but that hour never came.

It had always been the Rector's custom to read family prayers morning and evening, but the former was now delegated to his wife to do, for he was not able to get up till the middle of the day.

The evening devotion he still conducted before he went early to bed.

The winter had passed, and the first sudden warmth of the early spring days had begun, and Mr. Thorndyke had found them unusually trying.

He had essayed to walk round his beautiful garden one day in the sunshine, but had been obliged to give up the attempt, from the unusual sensation of extreme weariness.

And he had rested placidly in his arm chair, looking out towards the west, till the sun was sinking in bright effulgence in the sky.

"My dear," he said to Adela, who was sitting by his side, "I will read prayers now, and go to bed."

She looked at him in surprise.

"It is only six o'clock, father dear," she answered gently. "Did you forget the time? or will you have your dinner in bed to-night?"

"No, my child, I did not forget," he replied, in a faint voice; "but I am so tired, so weary; I want rest."

"Do not wait for prayers, darling!" she urged; "mother will read them. Let me give you my arm, and come at once."

"No," he answered, his eyes fixed upon the rosy west. "I will conduct them to-night."

Adela at once summoned her mother and the servants; and the Rector of Winsthorpe read a few verses of the Bible, and prayed; and those who heard that short, earnest prayer never forgot it.

It was uttered in a low, sweet voice, and ended with a blessing. And Mr. Thorndyke remained upon his knees, with bent head, the sun lighting up his pale face with seeming glory.

He did not move when the servants left the room, and Adela and her mother were very still, for the father and husband, as they thought, was still praying—still kneeling there with closed eyes, and a peaceful smile upon his lips.

But Winsthorpe's good pastor would neither preach, nor praise, nor pray, any more on earth!

His weary body had found its needed rest. His spirit had fled to the Great Unknown, where the mystery of mysteries will be to each revealed.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE NEW RECTOR OF WINSTHORPE.

THERE was scarcely a dry eye in Winsthorpe when the Rector, who had so long and so lovingly watched over them, was known to be dead.

He was mixed up in all that concerned both rich and poor.

He had buried their dead, comforted the mourners; he had given a strong hand over death's borderland to the feeble and dying; he had sat with the old, and read with them, and had ministered to the sick.

He had married the young men to the maidens, and baptised their children. He had known the secrets of many, and had faithfully kept them.

He had been true to his trust; a good shepherd, and the people of his flock knew it.

Most of them begged to be allowed to take one last look at the placid face, and not being refused, went, and laid their humble cottage flowers, bedewed with honest tears, at his feet; and the rare exotics which came after, were not more valued by the widow and orphan than the offerings of the poorer brethren who loved him.

There was no noise, no confusion, when they laid him in God's garden.

His followers were all mourners, not sight-seers, and his mourners mourned him truly.

The funeral over, Sir Richard Freemantle drove to the Rectory.

"Mrs. Thorndyke," he said kindly, taking both her hands in his, "I have come to fetch you and Adela. I have longed to do so every sad day of this sad week, but I felt that while he was here, nothing would entice you away."

"You were right," she answered with tear-dimmed eyes. "I could not have gone, nor must you ask me just yet."

"For Adela's sake, if not for your own," he pleaded. "She is completely overwrought, utterly overdone!"

"For her sake I would do anything, but I do not think she would wish it. Every place is so dear here, because he loved them; there is not a thing which does not remind me of my darling."

"That is just it; you will never be better while you remain here."

"You must give me a little time," she said sadly. "I shall only have six weeks in my dear old home, then I must seek another. That is clerical law, I believe?"

"Well, will you promise to pay me a long visit then, since I cannot persuade you now?"

"Thank you, I shall be glad to do so. You are very kind."

"I am much disappointed," he replied. "I hoped to have carried you off to-night. Where is Adela?"

She heard his voice, and came down to him, pale and wan, a silent agony in her azure eyes; but no word of complaint rose to her lips, and Mrs. Thorndyke had slipped away.

"Adela," he said softly, "my dear girl, my heart bleeds for you. I know what you have lost, but you must now let me be a father to you."

"No one can ever fill his place," she returned, in a low voice. "With me a place once filled in my affection is filled for ever!"

There was a look of keen disappointment upon the old Baronet's face; at the same time his admiration and respect for her increased.

"Then, my dear, I hope I may claim to be your friend?" he answered simply.

She stretched out her hand to him.

"One of my very best," she answered, warmly. "It is good of you to come to us in our sorrow."

"My dear, I had hoped you would come to me. I desired to take you back with me, away from these sad memories."

"They are all we have," she said, brokenly.

"Well, Adela, your mother would rather visit us later. Will that suit you?"

"I will do whatever she wishes," she returned, wearily. "It seems so utterly sad for us to leave our dear old home!"

Sir Richard remained in deep thought awhile; then there was a sudden brightening of his keen eyes, which showed an idea had struck him which had given him pleasure.

"May Lillian come to you to-morrow, child? She will be fairly vexed with me for not taking you home with me!"

"Mamma was right; our place is here for the present. Our time must needs be short, and there is much to be done."

"Will you mind leaving here very much?" he questioned.

"More than I can say. It has always been my home, and for mother the trial will be worse. I think this last straw will break her down. A clergyman's widow has always this last trouble above others, that however thoughtful her husband may have been he cannot prevent her being turned from the home which has been her Eden."

"Well, well, child, do not meet troubles half way. Promise to come to me this day month and I will see what can be done with your dear father's successor. He may be in no hurry to take possession of the Rectory; you know it is in my gift."

"I had forgotten it, although I have heard both my parents speak most gratefully of your great kindness to them."

(To be continued.)

TWO LITTLE HANDS.

—O—

Once, on a summer day divine,
Two little hands fell into mine;
How pink they were! how frail and fine!
Each one a crumpled velvet ball,
So soft, and so absurdly small,
Ah me! to hold within them all
Life's tangled and mysterious skein,
The mingled threads of joy and pain,
Whose hidden ends we seek in vain!

O! fast the years have fled away;
Two little hands, at work or play,
Still bide with me the lifelong day;
Now on some wilful mischief bent,
And now to loving service lent,
Now folded—sleepy and content—
The dimpled fingers curled, like those
Sweet jealous hands that cling and close
About the red heart of a rose.

I kissed them with a passionate sigh;
The quick fears spring, I scarce know why,
In thinking of the By and By!
How will they build, these little hands,
Upon the treacherous, sifting sands?
Or where the Rock eternal stands?
And will they fashion strong and true
The work that they shall find to do?
Dear little hands, if I but knew!

Could I but see the veiled Fate
Behind you barred and hidden gate!
Yet trusting this my love must wait!
O! when perplexed no more by these
Tear-blinded ways, my wanderings cease
In the sweet valleys of His peace:
Beyond the dark, some heavenly sign,
Some clue, however faint and fine,
Shall guide these little hands to mine!

DIANA'S DIAMONDS.

—O—

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE grand finale, the wind-up of the camp season, was a review on a grand scale, and a presentation of colours to our regiment, and a *déjeuner* at our mess afterwards.

We were lucky in a fine day, and I felt that my pretty new dress, got expressly for the occasion, would not be thrown away, but seen to advantage.

It consisted of a pale heliotrope-coloured silk, partly veiled in thread lace, and a small lace bonnet (the occasion was too serious for hats), trimmed with heliotrope velvet—a crinkled bandeau of plush round the brim set off to great advantage my gold-coloured hair.

I carried a parasol to match the dress, and I thought that I looked very nice as I joined Hugh, and strolled down towards the enclosure of spectators that already surrounded the preparations for the reception of new colours. I felt sad, too, as I walked along. This was one of my last days—last days are mostly sad—and neither weather, nor gaieties could possibly excuse my stay longer than another week; and I could scarcely restrain a sigh as I thought of the happy summer I had spent, and the dreamy winter that lay before me.

Of course, Hugh must not guess at my thoughts, nor dream that I was not glad that my time of being on show was over.

I glanced at him underneath the lace of my parasol. It struck me that he looked unusually grave; and, as it were, sick of life, and things in general.

"This will be our last festivity," I said; "the wind-up of a very pleasant summer. I must go—next week—on Tuesday—I think."

"Must you? Well, what must be must be! Wait till Wednesday, and I will get two days' leave, and take you over myself. I don't fancy your travelling alone!"

"Why not, pray?"

"Well, if you must know, because you are too young and pretty!"

I blushed with pleasure. A compliment of any kind was rare from Hugh.

"Only it's so cold here in winter you might have stayed on. There is some capital hunting, and I have bought that brown mare, and there's lots of balls in winter—county balls."

If he had pressed me a little, *little* more I would have stayed; but he did not. He relapsed into silence for some moments, and then he said, suddenly,—

"I shall be very lonely when you go!"

What would he be to me in my empty home at Brayfield?

"Yes, we have got on very well, and I have to thank you for a very pleasant visit. At least I've done some good in coming, Hugh!" and my voice shook in spite of me. "You do not think quite so badly of me as you did, do you?"

"No; and yet there is no reason that I should not. Nothing has been cleared up. The mystery is as great as ever. Only the diamonds are redeemed, and Ralph Torpichen is dead!"

"Yes, poor Ralph is dead, and he died without your knowing he was innocent—that he was your true friend as well as mine—that he wished you well."

"Very well. Why did he inveigle you to London?"

"He did not. I made him come with me. I dared not go alone. I was afraid of Joe. I have no head for business, buying or selling, and he has. It was he who sold the diamonds!"

"And pocketed the money?"

"Now, Hugh, that you know in your heart is a ridiculous idea. Ralph was a rich man. Why should I sell my diamonds for his benefit?"

"I acknowledge that I am bitterly prejudiced, and what you urge is true, Rance; but, oh! how long is this terrible time to last? When may I share these cruel secrets? Is there no hope of light at all? I do not know what this may be to you, but sometimes I am so maddened by hopes, or fears, doubts, suspicions, remorse and rage, that I feel as if I was being torn in two by separate identities. Sometimes I feel that I am a wretch to doubt you, despite all, and I feel inclined to throw myself on my knees, and beg you to forgive me. I feel that it is impossible that a girl so purely and simply brought up as you were, who never had a lover that she cared for, never kissed a man in her life but her father and myself, could suddenly develop into a false, intriguing, fashionable flirt, who looked upon her marriage vows with utter scorn and contempt. Then, on the other hand, I tell myself that I am a weak-minded fool, whose insane love for you have led me to spare you when I ought to have punished you, not by what I feel for you, but what is justice. Sometimes I say to myself, if other men knew all, would they not despise me, for extending to you the protection of my name and roof. Your father was a good man, and as true and honest as steel, but how do I know what you may have inherited from your mother?—what vices you may have drawn in with your breath, and transmitted to—"

"There!" I said, halting, "if you are going to drag that in I shall turn about and walk home."

"Well, I won't. I was only telling you my thoughts, and what I have sometimes imagined—perhaps most wrongly—that you may have inherited from your mother."

"My mother!" The words had barely left his lips when she flashed by in a carriage and pair, seated beside a lady, and *vis-à-vis* to two gentlemen. She looked very elegant, and very happy.

"Lady Lorraine!" exclaimed Hugh—and I believe he muttered some imprecation—"she is our evil genius. What brings her here? This is quite out of her usual beat."

"I suppose she is staying with Mr. and Mrs.

Crofton. That is their carriage, and that is Captain Carden with them."

"Mind you don't speak to her, Di," he said impressively.

"Hugh, dear Hugh!" I paused, and sheltered myself from the public eye behind my pretty parasol. "If I do you must forgive me. She holds me in the hollow of her hand."

"A nice person to have got you at her mercy! A *divorcée*, a woman that abandoned her husband and children."

"I know that—I know all," I interrupted piteously.

"Who told you?"

"She did herself," I rejoined, colouring vividly.

Hugh stared. "Well, Rance, no wonder you blush! Here we are, and our long *tête à tête* is attracting attention. Promise me, if I do not have another chance of speaking to you alive, that you will make a desperate effort to shake off this mystery—to get rid of this secret. If the worst comes to the worst, buy yourself off. Handsome, pretty, if it takes all your fortune, I have sufficient money for both of us. My godfather left me a decent legacy most unexpectedly, and I am no longer a pauper."

"I promise to do my very best," was my hurried reply, as he joined the rest of the assembly.

The company gathered together to see our regiment receive its new colours was numerous and distinguished. Among them all no one looked more handsome and *distingué* than Lady Lorraine. She was dressed in black lace that literally glittered with jet, and the sombre setting suited her still fair complexion. She soon spied me at some distance from her seat, and treated me to many becks and wretched smiles, but she could not approach me. When the ceremony was over she snatched an opportunity, on her way to the carriage, to say beneath the shelter of her sunshade,—

"I see you are all right."

"No!" I answered hurriedly. "And I must speak to you. Oh! do not turn a deaf ear to me *this time*."

"I don't wish to, you silly girl; I shall manage a *tête-à-tête* somehow before the day is over."

"But Hugh!"

"Yes, and under your own roof, and in spite of Hugh." Moving on at the *déjeuner* we were separated by at least a dozen people. The affair went off well; the viands were superb, toasts were given, and the band played at intervals. Towards the end of the entertainment there was a commotion, and one of our officers rushed to me, saying,—

"Lady Lorraine feels very faint. She told me to fetch you, Mrs. Halford, as you are a friend of hers."

Of course, in the face of all the company, and this request, I was bound to go, and I found her in an arm-chair in the ante-room; one fanning her, another holding salts to her nose; a third madly waving a newspaper.

"It is the heat," she said, languidly. "You live close by, dear Mrs. Halford; you shall take me home with you for a little while, and I will lie down in a cool room, and I shall be all right in an hour's time."

What could I say? I was delighted, of course, and with her usual wit she had managed the meeting most naturally. But Hugh did look at all pleased when he saw me walking off to our own hut, with the gentle invalid on my arm.

"No. No one was to trouble about her, she preferred to be quite alone, and would trust herself entirely to Mrs. Halford's kind hospitality."

CHAPTER XLIX.

"Did I not manage it well?" she said, in her natural voice, as we entered the hut. "It was awfully hot though, and I shall just go

into your bedroom, and bathe my face and hands; it will refresh me."

Peggy came in and attended, but there was no smile of welcome or recognition for my mother from Mrs. Clark.

"Well, old Peggy, you are getting younger every day," she said. "You don't seem to remember me!"

"Remember you! Oh, yes, ma'am. No one who once knew you was ever likely to forget you," said Peggy, with biting emphasis.

"Now I wonder if you mean that as a compliment, or otherwise?" she asked, as she arranged her hair.

"Whatever way you like, ma'am," said Peggy grimly.

"Come into the drawing-room, Diana?" said my mother; "and don't let anyone disturb us, Peggy. You may as well bring us some tea presently." And taking my arm, she led me across the passage into our pretty sitting-room. As she stood and surveyed it, and took in all my embellishments—flowers, photos, fancy work, pretty curtains, and a piano, she exclaimed, "What a charming little nest! And of course Hugh and you are a couple of love-birds. I knew you would soon bring him round and tame him, ferocious as he was! It's an art that runs in our family."

"An art that has not descended to me! We are anything but a pair of love-birds; as to taming Hugh, he has tamed me. He has never forgiven me, and I am only here for the sake of appearances, and to silence Mrs. Grandy."

"And a sweetly pretty appearance you make, my child! you look lovely in that mauve dress!"

"Oh, mother!" I cried passionately, "how can you talk like this when my heart is breaking? I have been a mother too. I know a mother's feelings. How can you bear to cause me—your own child—such sorrow and such shame?"

"Oh, come, my dear, we are not on the stage! You really have quite a tragic air. I would not be a bit surprised if you could act. You would make a fine tragic actress!"

"Act! I am sick and tired of acting, and playing a part, pretending that I am happy in my home, when it is really nothing but a whitened sepulchre!"

"Now, now, that is not very flattering to this dear little hut! Sit down quietly instead of wearing out the carpet, and let me talk to you reasonably. You got the diamonds, I conclude?"

"Yes. Did you send them?"

"I did. I have made you the *amende honorable*. You may not have heard that Sir Roper is no more. He died nearly a year ago. That yachting trip did not agree with him, poor dear man! He left me a large annuity, and a most unexpected sum in ready cash, so I was able to redeem your necklace. You may thank Captain Carden for that. He never gave me any peace till I did so. I am going to marry Captain Carden as soon as the year is out!"

"Mother!"

"There now, you need not scream. I know I am ten years his senior, but I do not look it; and every woman is just the age she looks, and no more. At a distance, and with my back to the light, I pass for eight-and-twenty. Now, you look older than you are. We might easily pass for sisters!"

"And can you wonder? I feel as if I were fifty, but I cannot realise what you tell me about Captain Carden. I cannot imagine him my stepfather!"

"And you need not after this. We shall never meet again on this side of the grave. This is our last interview."

"Then, in that case, mother, you will surely release me from my promise now? The release will cost you nothing, and it will set me free from torture. Oh, mother!" I cried, rising suddenly, and throwing myself on my knees before her. "If you will not take off my chains I must break them! Life, as it is, is too bitter for me. Hear me, I entreat of

you!" seizing her hands in mine. "Once you said I held your life and fate in my keeping. I did not fail you. Now, the situation is reversed. You have my fate, and my happiness in your power. I will not let you go till you release me from my promise!"

She smiled a smile that boded ill. I knew it well of old. She looked down at me as if I was some quaint, amusing spectacle—not her only child on her knees before her—and, as it were, begging for her life!

"Have pity upon me!" I cried, and then I burst into tears.

Someone entered the room at this moment. Someone threw wide the door. It was Hugh, but when he discovered me grovelling before Lady Lorraine he closed it sharply on the inside, and said,—

"Diana, may I ask the meaning of this? Get up at once!"

"Oh!" exclaimed our visitor, rising. "I see we are going to have a scene, and I shall go!" taking her gloves.

"Not before you release my wife from what ever ridiculous promise she has made you. Not till then, Lady Lorraine!" said Hugh, placing his back to the door, and looking very determined.

"You would detain me here by force, sir? Conduct very becoming to an officer, and a gentleman; but I can easily open the window and call out!"

"If you do you will be sorry for it," he rejoined. "If you have that unhappy girl in your power I have you in mine."

"As how, most chivalrous host?" she asked, with a sneer.

"A friend of mine knows all your past. Every particular can be mine within twenty-four hours. All facts detailed, and I shall not scruple to use my weapon, and to drive you out of decent society. Take your instrument of torture off my wife, and you shall go free. If you refuse to do so within forty-eight hours I guarantee that no respectable woman will speak to you, that no man who values his position will be seen in your society, and that you will be glad to go abroad, and spend another ten years in rehabilitating your character, and giving people once more time to forget. So choose. I give you ten minutes. It is now exactly a quarter past four. You see at twenty-five minutes past you can go if you please; but if you go without making a clean breast of it, that door, as you pass through it, takes you not merely out of this house, but out of society."

I stood amazed. Here was a champion, indeed! Cruel as Hugh seemed, how much more cruel she had been to me! She stood as if stupefied, and looked at Hugh, her face livid with passion. Her fair eyebrows stood out from her fair head like the bristling of an animal's hair. Her eyes flashed, her lips worked, and her expression was really terrible to see. Hugh, on the other hand, was surprisingly cool and collected; not a bit as he used to be when I was in his black books—he was not in a passion. He calmly took up a newspaper, and threw himself into an arm-chair, as if no one was present.

"I wish you joy of your husband!" said Lady Lorraine, in a kind of choked voice. "No wonder you talk of having a broken heart. I shall not intrude on this fair domestic scene any longer—casting a glance at where I leant against the mantel-piece, with tear-stained face, and dishevelled hair, and another at Hugh, who was almost concealed behind The Field."

Then she moved gracefully towards the door. As she did so he laid down the paper, and turned and looked at her. He seemed to hold her spell-bound by his eyes. She faltered with her hand on the lock, and said,—

"What is the name of your detective friend?"

"George Grahame, late major in the regiment of Central India Horse."

At this potent name she recoiled as if she had been struck a blow. She seemed, as if

were, to collapse, to lose all her temper, anger, courage, pride—aye, and her beauty."

"Diana," she said, sinking into a chair, and covering her eyes with her hand, "you may tell him. You are released from your oath."

I, now that I was free, trembled exceedingly, but I went over to Hugh, and took his hand, and said,—

"Hugh, you will understand everything when I tell you that Lady Lorraine is my mother!"

For a moment he stood stock-still and silent, and then he exclaimed,—

"It cannot be—it is not true. Your mother is dead!"

"Do you refuse to believe in old relations?" said Lady Lorraine, looking up. "Compare our faces, our hands, our height, and then say if there is no tie between us."

She stared at him hard as she spoke; and he, with a kind of groan, exclaimed,—

"What you say is true. I never noticed it before. Yes, there is an unmistakable family likeness!"

"You little guessed that Lady Lorraine was your mother-in-law, did you? Now, you will scarcely care to bound a member of your own family from society, will you?" and she laughed—such a laugh.

"And how long has she known?" said Hugh, not noticing the conclusion of this speech, and pointing to me.

"Eighteen months."

"What was your object in discovering yourself?"

"The natural yearning of a mother," she rejoined, with a peculiar smile. "Now you know you may release me. Diana will tell you all there is to tell. We need never meet again!"

"But I always understood that Diana's mother was dead?" said Hugh, evidently not yet fully satisfied.

"Dead to her. Spare me the task of raking up the ashes of my past!"

"Certainly, I will, before your daughter," he said, unusually sternly.

"One word before I go—a jealous husband is an abomination. You are ridiculously and unnecessarily jealous—jealous of Ralph Torpichen. Diana has no spirit. She submitted to her misfortunes. She is a little fool, and a great deal fonder of you than you deserve. If you had had to deal with me it would have been another story."

"I thank Heaven that I had not, madam! I'm making her a low bow, as he opened the door for her to pass out."

She, on her part, made him a sweeping, satirical courtesy, nodded briefly to me, and so departed. I have never seen her since.

CHAPTER L.

"Now, Rance, tell me all about it," said Hugh, when the door closed upon our recent companion.

"There is so much to tell, I don't know where to begin."

"Begin at the very commencement, and go straight ahead. How did she first discover you?"

"By the necklace. The first time she saw it on my neck she nearly fainted. She questioned me closely, and after about a month she came to me one evening and made me swear to keep secret something she was going to tell me, and that I must know. I begged and implored of her not to tell me, or to allow me to share it with you; but she would not hear of this, and then she told me that she was my mother. Like you I could not believe it at first. I had always thought of my mother as dead—a kind of halo of mystery and romance and awe enshrined her memory. To find my mother alive, and standing before me in the person of Lady Lorraine, was a great shock!"

"So I should fancy."

"After this she used to come to see me till you forbid her the house, and then she made me meet her in Ralph's rooms one night when you were away. She had such influence over me she could make me do anything. Often, when I was alone, I swore to myself I would resist her, although she was my mother; but when we met it was always the same old story. I did whatever she ordered."

"And what did she want?"

"Money—money, most desperately—to pay her debts before a certain day, and save her from utter disgrace. She said that if I did not save her she would commit suicide without fail. I told her I had no money that I could spend; that it was all strictly secured. I offered her my pin-money. It was but a drop in the sea, and then she thought of my diamonds."

"Ah! I am not surprised at that!"

"And suggested that I should get rid of them. She had first of all deliberately planned out the train I was to go by, the shop I was to sell them at, and who was to go with me. That latter arrangement was not so easy. Ralph was most reluctant to have anything to say to it. Indeed he refused."

"And showed his sense, like a wise man."

"Mother talked me into taking him over—that was when he came to tea. I prevailed on him to escort me, and he agreed, though he said he had a presentation that we should get into hot water with you."

"And his surprise was perfectly natural!"

"Then we went to London. He managed the sale, got the cheque, you saw us at lunch. And, oh! how terrified I was! I felt as if I had been committing some crime. However, you did not recognise me, and I got home safely, and paid over the money to my mother, and there was an end of the matter."

"Excepting that then I found you out."

"Yes. And what my secret has cost me, you may guess. No; I don't think you could guess."

"Why on earth was I kept in the dark, and would never have known—never? She would have kept your mouth shut always, only I managed to put the screw on her."

"I think it was because she thought you would not have allowed me to pawn the diamonds."

"And she was perfectly right; I would not. She never said so true a word as when she called you a goose."

"Only a goose about you, Hugh," I amended.

"That's true; and also that you are ten times too good for me, and that I have been a jealous, cruel, ruthless savage!"

"Yes, I think you have," I said. "I must say I quite agree with you."

"And if I am a savage you have been a cat-spaw, madam, need quite mercilessly in dragging your mother's chestnuts out of the fire, and thereby burning your pretty little fingers most painfully"—lifting, as he spoke, my hand to his lips.

"Rance, I am sorry to say it, but I must. Your mother is a wicked, heartless woman. She used your innocence against yourself, and sacrificed your happiness, aye, and mine, as if it were of no more value than a bit of thistledown, or an old glove."

"Yes, that is true; but let us forgive her, and try to forget her—for the future."

"You may, but I can't. No wonder your father abjured the world, and hid himself in the depths of the jungle. What a life she must have led him! So handsome, so utterly heartless, so selfish, and so bad! I suppose you don't know her real past?"

"Yes, she gave it to me in writing. I have it in my dressing-case."

"She never gave you her real story. She dared not," cried Hugh, flushing up to the roots of his hair. "She would never, never show herself in her real colours to her own child. She has surely some remains of what was once self-respect."

"Miss Rance," said Peggy, opening the door. "Oh! an' is she gone?" looking very

eagerly round, as if she could be up the chimney, or under the table.

"Yes; never to come back, and make any more mischief between Miss Rance and me," said Hugh.

"Heaven be praised for that same," said Peggy, piously. "And who do you think she is, after all?"

"Why, Peggy, of course we know, we all know now—my mother."

"And so I thought till latterly, but I found reason to change me mind. However, as I thought she was maybe gone for good, I said nothing. She is no more your mother than I am!" concluded Peggy, impressively.

"That's the best thing I ever heard you say, Peggy," said Hugh, springing up, and shaking her hand. "If it is true, ask for anything I possess, and it's yours."

"And suppose I was to ask for Miss Rance—that is all the same as me own child?"

"No, no, Peggy, you would not do that. But tell us quickly—who is Lady Lorraine?"

"She is your aunt, sir, by marriage; Miss Rance's mother's sister—her Aunt Sophy. Oh, dear, dear me, she and the mistress was always as like one another as two drops of water, and she had great influence over your mother, who was only weak—whilst she was wicked—oh! rare and wicked!"

I was so happy to hear that Lady Lorraine was only my aunt that I could not speak for very joy. Agitation strangled the words in my throat.

"Go on, Peggy," said Hugh, imperiously. "Tell us all—everything about her—and whilst you are telling us, sit down."

"Oh, well, it's a poor story. There was a lot of mighty pretty sisters that came out to India, and married. Some were good, and most was bad! Mrs. Manners was rare and lovely, and she married Dr. Manners because another man jilted her. She did not care for him at all, only she wanted a home of her own, and was bullied by her sister. Dr. Manners, the poor master, fairly worshipped her and the ground she trod on, but she was blithe and gay, and always wanting dancing and good company, and new dresses. And he was quiet and dark in himself, and may be a bit stern, and she was afraid of him."

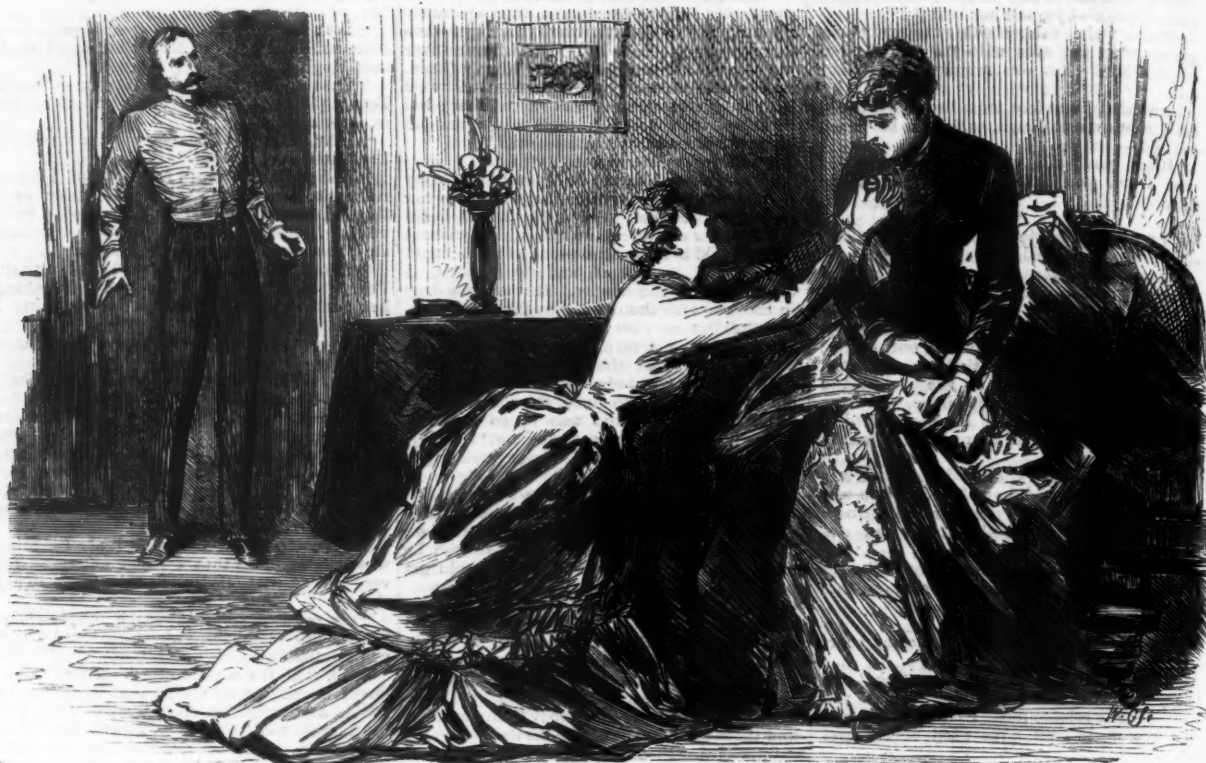
"In fact," interrupted Hugh, "they were a couple on the pattern of your young lady and me—to cut it short."

"Indeed, no," interrupted Peggy warmly. "Miss Rance never was a flirt or a gadder, and her father was twice as good a husband as you are."

"That settles it—settles me!" said Hugh, looking at me with a laugh. "I'm no match for Peggy, and though you may be afraid of me, I'm afraid of her. Well Peggy, go on!"

"Everything was nice and pleasant enough, till Mrs. Gallop came. That's Sophy, and she soon turned the house upside down, and put all sorts of bad and extravagant notions into your mother's head. She told her your father was a stupid old idiot, that did not appreciate her; that when a woman was young and pretty she ought to amuse herself; and, indeed, she spoke to willing ears. She borrowed your mother's money and jewellery; she half wore out her clothes, and she made terrible trouble between the master and mistress. Oh, terrible! After about six months he could not stand her any longer, and one day he gave her her railway fare, and just turned her out. She was mad, she had such grand times with gentlemen, and she was raging at having to go, and I heard her say she would pay him out yet, and she did; for when, a month after, your mother ran away with Colonel Paget, it was all Mrs. Gallop's plotting and doing. Your father never held up his head again. He got a divorce, and took you and your brother and Tony and me off to roam the world, and he settled on the old bungalow. He had seen it once, he said, years before when he was out shooting, and it seemed a very good hiding-place for a broken-hearted man."

"But how do you know Lady Lorraine is



["HAVE PITY UPON ME!" I CRIED, AND THEN I BURST INTO TEARS.]

my Aunt Sophy?" I asked, "I thought you recognised her as my mother, that time at Southsea!"

"I did at first! Her face was the same, but when her wicked tricks began I misdoubted; but it was *Sophy*, and we always heard your mother was dead. If I had been at Southsea, instead of nursing poor Tony this trouble would never have happened, for I would have seen and known her, as I did to-day! I can swear to Mrs. Gallop; she has two little moles on her wrist. I saw them when she washed her hands, and she is taller than your mother, and your mother had eyes like you; but Mrs. Gallop's were dark blue—now yours are dark brown."

"But how could she dare to tell me such a dreadful story, and personate her dead sister?"

"Oh! she is wicked enough for anything; and she does not know what *dare* means! You were useful to her, Miss Rance, or she never would have troubled you—only it was the necklace tempted her!"

"Yes, it is always at the bottom of my misfortune, Hugh," turning to him abruptly. "I shall sell it now in earnest. I shall never wear it again. Let it be broken up and scattered to the four winds."

"Very well, my dear; as you please."

"And is my mother really dead, Peggy?" I inquired anxiously.

"Yes, miss. I was speaking to a man two days ago—a contractor on the camp—he and Tony was in the same regiment twenty years ago, at Lahore. He knew your mother well, and the whole story; he told me she died about two years after Colonel Paget married her. She is buried at Agra; he saw her grave in the cemetery there. She was a weak-spirited lady, and the shame, he said, killed her. No other lady would look at her, and she fretted for her children, and the disgrace she had brought on them. Yes, Miss Rance; your own mother was weak, and easily led, but

she repented sorely of her sins before she died. This man, Sheridan, can tell you, that his wife attended her on her death-bed. She is dead now."

"What is to be done with your Aunt Sophy?" said Hugh, now pacing the room. "She is staying at the Cliftons, and is within easy reach. I shall have it out with her. Yes, I'll ride over there to-morrow after breakfast, and let her know that she has been found out, and that we are no longer her dupes."

"I need not go, need I?" I asked, with a sinking heart.

"You shall never see her again if I can help it," was his answer; "and after I have done with her to-morrow believe me she will avoid you like the plague for the remainder of her days."

Hugh was as good as his word. The next morning he started off, was absent three hours, and when he returned he produced a note, which he handed to me with some triumph. I tore it open, and it ran as follows:—

"Yes; I am your aunt, Sophy Gallop. Your mother died eighteen years ago, and is buried at Agra. Your husband makes me write this. I promise never to see you, or communicate with you again. On his part he promises to respect the secrets of my former life. A credulous simpleton like you was a strong temptation to a wicked, prowling lioness like me. This is all the excuse I can make. Forget, if you can, that you have ever known, to your cost, your mother's sister."

"P.S.—The story I wrote for you was a story!"

"SOPHY LORELAINE."

After this Hugh took two months' leave, as the leave season had commenced, and we went off abroad on a kind of second honeymoon.

The delights of Paris, Florence, Venice, and Vienna were new to me; and I enjoyed every-

thing with the zest of youth, of novelty, and of a clear conscience.

Peggy refused to accompany us for once, and paid a long visit to some relations among the Dublin mountains; but she is as much a portion of our household as I am myself, and rules Hugh with a rod of iron.

After all Ralph Torpichen was not drowned. He clung to a spar, and was picked up in the Channel by an American-bound steamer.

Hugh and I spent a very pleasant fortnight between Torpichen Park and Brayfield Rectory, and Ralph undertook to dispose of my necklace—finally, and for ever.

It was broken-up, and sold in separate lots all over Europe. The celebrated necklace is now scattered far and wide, and the knowledge of this causes me no regret.

As to the "Evil Eye" it has gone eastward again. It is now the property of a Persian Prince. Let us hope that it will work him no misfortune. The necklace realised a large sum of money, which we are going to invest in a nice country place whenever Hugh turns his sword into a ploughshare. Of Selina I see but little. Mrs. Halford corresponds with us regularly. Joe has married our kitchen-maid, and keeps Kitty in state at "Rivals' Green," and is always more or less in a state of inebriation.

He had the impudence to write to me lately, and ask for the loan of a hundred pounds! We spent the winter at the camp, despite the climate, and I rode the brown mare with the Kildare hounds all through the season. I went to frequent dances, as Hugh had foretold, and I was as happy—nay, I am as happy—as the day is long, and I have every reason to be so. I have youth, health, wealth, many friends, and a devoted husband; and among my numerous sources of happiness I want one that may seem rather strange. I have got rid of my diamonds!

[THE END.]



["DON'T DO THAT!" THE DANCER CRIED. "YOU WILL THROW IT AWAY LIKE A POISONED THING WHEN YOU KNOW ALL!"]

NOVELLETTE.]

STORM AND SUNSHINE.

—O—

CHAPTER I.

BEAUTIFUL EXCEEDINGLY.

"It's no use, Dolly dear, not the least bit. I am a social failure and you cannot do anything with me."

"Nonsense, Millie, don't talk like that!"

And the somewhat grave and sedate eldest daughter of Dr. Dalrymple, the well-known and universally respected physician of the little town of Rippleworth, tried to frown as she arranged a lace fichu about her younger sister's neck, and implored her to be "a little rational" during the evening before them.

"Don't expect it of me," Miss Millie replied. "I never saw a real live lord in all my life, and I shall be so elated at his presence in our drawing-room, that I shall be sure to do something to distinguish myself."

Miss Dalrymple kissed her young sister with something of a mother's fondness; and, indeed, her love for the lovely, wilful girl, whose pranks often made her very uneasy, was more like that of a mother than a sister.

She could never forget the day when she had stood by her mother's deathbed, and her father had put the baby of a week old in her arms, saying hoarsely,—

"She has no mother, Dolly!"

Dolly had no mother herself, poor child, and it seemed to her as if everything she prized had gone out of the world with the closing of those gentle eyes that had never looked at her without love in them.

She loved her father very dearly too, but he had his business and his daily cares, and Mrs. Dalrymple and her little daughter had been all in all to each other. Dorothy, as she had been named after her maternal grandmother, was twelve years old when her mother died,

and many children had come and gone in the household before the arrival of the little one whose birth cost her mother her life.

It was a sacred trust that the child accepted when she hugged the little soft, warm baby in her childish arms and wept out her passionate grief, with it lying on her bosom. In vain the nurse protested, and declared that it would bring ill-luck to the baby to have it cried over so,—Dolly had her will and kept her little sister till she fell asleep with the new charge in her embrace, and knew nothing more till she found herself in bed, with her father holding her hand, and looking at her with unutterable tenderness.

They talked together for some time, and from that hour his little daughter became her father's right hand and sweet, grave helpmeet, and the baby's guardian and caretaker.

The little one would be good with her when no one else could soothe its fractiousness, and the nurses used to look forward to Dolly's daily return from school as the one streak of sunshine that came into the nursery.

Nurses and nurseries were things of the far away past on this sunny autumn evening, when Dorothy Dalrymple and her sister stood together in their dressing-room, putting the finishing touches to their toilettes.

Their father was going to bring a gentleman home to dinner with him, rather a rare event, for he was not fond of company in his quiet hours at home.

Now and then a guest put in an appearance, but this was a special occasion. The visitor was, as Millie expressed it, a "real live lord." A young gentleman, immensely rich according to report, and pretty nearly alone in the world as far as relations went.

Millie Dalrymple, named Mildred, after her mother, had grown up a bright, fresh English girl, neither perfectly lovely, nor exceptionally faultless. She realized the laureate's idea of a "a rosebud set with little wilful thorns" exactly.

The wilfulness was apparent in every action of her life, and the thorns were in evidence continually; yet everybody loved Millie somehow. There was a charm about her that no one could resist for long together. She was beautiful with the beauty of fresh, bright girlhood more than with any regularity of feature.

"Eyes and hair are my strong points," she said to her sister, with the utmost gravity, scrutinising herself in the glass the while. "Every well conducted heroine has eyes like saucers, and hair like a lion's mane; mine is rather dark for the present taste, but there's plenty of it, and my eyes are big enough to please the most ardent of the readers of the penny dreadfuls!"

"My dear Millie, what horrid things you do say," her sister said, caressing the "mane" aforesaid, and thinking that she had seldom seen either such eyes or such hair as her young sister's. "Your hair is lovely if you would only do it up a little tighter; and your eyes—well, child, you have mamma's eyes, and they were the most beautiful in all the world to me!"

"Ah! you can remember her, you dear old thing, and I can't. I am glad I am like her in something. Don't bother about my hair, Dolly, I couldn't strain it up in a tight knot like yours, to have a coronet placed on it to-morrow!"

Miss Dalrymple rather affected the severe in her style of dressing; it suited her somewhat prim beauty. She was like her father, dainty and precise, and her sister was just the opposite. Millie, in a dress that lent itself to straight lines and prim arrangement, looked at once like a "shorn lamb," as she told her father when she came down to dinner one day, arrayed in a dress of Dolly's choosing and devising. It was a strictly fashionable garment, but it was not Millie Dalrymple's style of gown, and the doctor begged that she might have no more like it.

She had wavy, flowing hair, and she had achieved a style of her own in dressing it. She saw a statue one day at an exhibition—a splendid antique head, and she had gone home and shut herself up and declined to show herself to any one till she had arranged her abundant locks in the fashion thereon represented. It was eminently becoming, and though Miss Dalrymple would have preferred something nearer the fashion of the present day, she was fain to confess that the loose roll and the wavy mass it encircled were eminently becoming to Millie.

"She doesn't look a bit like other people," she said to her father one day when she was particularly exercised by some eccentricity of Millie's toilet.

"She looks like herself. She is a gem of artistic dressing," he replied. "Let her alone, Dolly dear; she will never outrage good taste, whatever she puts on."

Miss Dalrymple mourned in secret over her father's perverted taste in dress and decoration; he was inclined to be æsthetic, and she went conscientiously by the fashion books and the milliners' directions, and was quoted as the best dressed lady in Rippleworth. She looked wonderfully well arrayed as she stood there in the soft light of the shaded lamp, putting the finishing touches to the toilette of her young sister. Her dark blue velvet dress accorded well with her fair hair. It was a somewhat heavy dress for the season, and made the wearer look every day of her nearly thirty years; but Dorothy Dalrymple was not a girlish-looking woman, and a simpler style of gown would not have suited her half so well; she looked queenly and aristocratic, and the white lace that lay in clouds about her arms and shoulders showed up her exquisitely fair skin to perfection.

"You had better let me alone, Dolly," Mildred said, surveying her sister with girlish love and admiration. "I am a hideous failure looked at in the light of your gorgeousness. I never shall learn to dress like you!"

"My darling, papa does not wish that you should," Miss Dalrymple said, with a little sigh over the terrible ignorance of the doctor on all matters of feminine attire and behaviour. "He rather likes your outre style, and it becomes you, child. Look at yourself, you might have stepped out of a picture, you are like nothing seen in this every-day life!"

"Thank goodness for that same," Miss Millie said, devoutly to herself. To look like any of the fashion plates that were so dear to her sister's heart was dreadful in her eyes. She looked in the glass as she was hidden, and saw a fairy vision; a lithe, girlish figure arrayed in creamy white drapery soft and clinging, with lace as soft plentifully bestowed about it, in a fashion that would have driven a London modiste crazy. But the doctor's daughters had a maid between them that "had a head on her shoulders," Millie always declared, and would do as she was told. She was an artist in her way too, as was her young mistress, and could turn either of her ladies out in the peculiar style that most became them, in a manner many a fashionable modiste would have envied.

Millie's hair was of her own arranging, no one could do it as she could herself; a little help from the maid in brushing out the heavy wavy mass was all she wanted, and the girl was free to adorn Dorothy's head with the elaborate puffings and plaitings that were the height of fashion just then.

"You are just lovely, Dolly!" Mildred said, after a minute inspection of her sister's array. "The most beautiful sister that ever a wicked, disobedient girl was blessed with. Dolly, I foresee a great future for you!"

"As how?"

"This lord will fall in love with you. I know he will!"

"What nonsense!"

"I don't think it is nonsense; he is fresh from the wilds of somewhere, and has lived amongst savages, or something very like it, for ever so long. He will never resist that

blue velvet and my dear old sister's face and voice. What are you going to sing to him, Dolly? He'll be a gone coon if he hears your voice!"

"My dear Mildred, wherever did you pick up such a horrible expression?" asked the elder sister in dismay, "slang is such bad form!"

"Is it? Who is talking slang now, I wonder," retorted Miss Mildred, seating herself on the arm of the sofa and endangering the smoothness of her dress. "What does bad form mean, you most particular of sisters?"

"It is an admissible expression," Miss Dalrymple replied, colouring just the least bit, for it was slang and Millie knew it. "But the other?"

"What? 'a gone coon!' Go and quarrel with the pater about it; I heard him say it!"

"Papa can use expressions that are hardly fit for us," Dolly said. "Was that the bell, Millie?"

"Just that!" Millie said, taking another look at herself in the glass. "The hour is at hand, Dorothy. The lord has arrived!"

Miss Dalrymple was intensely curious about this guest of their father's. Dr. Dalrymple had told them incidentally, a little time before, that he had been called in while at Liverpool on business, to a young gentleman who had been suddenly taken ill at one of the principal hotels there. He found that his new patient was Lord Otterville, whose name was prominently before the public as a traveller of spirit and unflagging energy.

He had just returned from a prolonged tour in the wildest parts of South America, and his published adventures made a fashionable volume, which was having a good sale, and making him the lion of the hour. He shrank in an odd fashion from anything like popularity, and resisted being lionised with all his might. No one knew quite why he had gone abroad, Society had set him down as the probable husband of the loveliest and richest girl of the season, and all sorts of reports were rife about the future settlement and proceeding of the young pair, when all of a sudden, to the amazement of everyone except perhaps the young lady herself, Lord Otterville disappeared, and everything was at an end.

His lawyer had instructions as to the care of his estates, and the houses upon them were to be let for a term, and society knew him no more.

The young lady to whom he had been supposed to be paying his devoirs declared stoutly that there had been nothing of the sort. Lord Otterville and she had been very good friends, nothing more. Questioned as to the cause of his sudden departure, she declared she knew nothing; Lord Otterville was not in her keeping, and had not confided in her. What she guessed she should keep to herself.

She was heart-whole and married before the year was out, and presently the fashionable world forgot his lordship, and ceased to wonder what he was doing on the other side of the Atlantic. Society began to talk about him again, when presently came well-written papers from him in his exile, telling of his adventures and making the fortunate paper which had secured them go up like a Stock Exchange bubble. He was a celebrated man when he once more set foot on English soil, after an absence of three years, and met Dr. Dalrymple on the very first day.

He took a liking to the genial, friendly doctor, and the elder man was touched by the curious loneliness of the traveller, who had come home to find no one to meet him, and no friendly hand stretched out in greeting.

"I have no one but myself to blame for that," the young man said, when the doctor had seen him comfortably settled in bed, and in a fair way to be pleasantly nursed and cared for.

"I did intend when I went away to see England no more; the next heir would have heard if anything happened to me: I tried to make that certain. My only wish was to be lost."

"An eccentric young fellow evidently," was

Dr. Dalrymple's mental comment on this speech. Aloud he only said, "It is a good thing you altered your mind, my lord."

"Is it, I wonder?" the young man said with a curiously sad smile. "It was fate, I think, I could not help it. All on a sudden, in the solitude of a South American forest, with more doubt than I care to think about now on us, that we should ever get out of it, came the feeling that I must get home, that my destiny lay here, and that the way would be made smooth for me somehow; and I came. Have I obeyed a true or false impulse, I wonder?"

"You must get well before you allow yourself to think about it, my lord," the doctor said, never doubting that his patient was wandering a little. He was very feverish, and absolute quiet was the only thing for him just now.

CHAPTER II.

THE HAND OF FATE.

LORD OTTENVILLE recovered, and the friendship thus begun between doctor and patient did not die away. The young man saw in the kindly physician a true gentleman, and an intellectual companion, and longed to know more of him.

"You must let me visit you when I come to town," he said when they parted. "I must go and look after my places and show myself on my own lands, I suppose; and then I shall come to London, and to your house if you will have me."

"My house is but a dull one, my lord," Dr. Dalrymple replied. "I am a hard-working fellow, with enough to do to keep the wolf from the door sometimes—figuratively I mean. We do not starve, my girls and me, and I can afford to give them a little pleasure now and then. But we have not much to offer in the shape of amusement to anyone."

"Everything will be amusement to me after the wilderness and the savages," Lord Otterville said, with a laugh. "I shall certainly come, unless you forbid it. Are your daughters little girls, Dr. Dalrymple?"

"One of them is," the doctor replied, and he spoke in all good faith. He had never looked upon Millie as anything else but a child. She had grown up under his eye and seemed to be no older now than she had been years ago, when she used to climb his knees and hunt his pocket for sweets. She would sit upon his knee now and arrange his hair with a pencil or a pair of scissors, or anything else that came handy, and he was apt to forget how many years it was since Dorothy was a child, and Millie a little helpless baby.

"Come and dine with us the first day you can spare," he said, as he shook hands with his patient. And the day had come, and Lord Otterville had made his appearance.

Dorothy Dalrymple went down stairs to the drawing-room with no small trepidation. She wanted to make an impression on her father's guest. She knew she was looking her very best, and—well this stranger was unmarried and rich enough to give her all the good things that her soul coveted.

She was a good daughter, this eldest child of the house, but there were times when she longed with the ardent longing that comes to every woman some time in her life to get away from Rippleworth and the domestic duties of her father's housekeeper, and have a home and a menage of her own.

Such a home had come very near her once, when she was younger and Millie a little child. But she had put her duty and love into the balance conscientiously and the happiness had given way.

She remained single for the sake of her father and her young sister, and she had had her reward in the clinging love and adoration of the one, and the heartfelt affection of the other.

Now and then thoughts of what might have been would creep in unbidden, but she put them aside with a resolute will.

"What is he like, I wonder?" she asked herself as she went towards the drawing-room door. "A rough traveller, I daresay, with no more manners than one of the bears he has hunted or the Pumas he has trapped."

She had read Lord Otterville's book, and pictured him to herself as something as wild and unkempt as the pictures with which it was illustrated, and which represented the action of a noble house as a sort of modern Robinson Crusoe, as far as attire and personal appearance was concerned.

She expected a sort of human bear, and opened the door with no particular feeling except curiosity moving her.

What she saw was a slender, youthful-looking, aristocratic man, with serious eyes and white hands, and no more trace of travel or hardship about him than the veriest dandy that ever dawdled through a London season.

He was faultlessly dressed, and wore a white flower in his buttonhole. And his whole air was that of a man accustomed to all the refinements of life.

She could not associate him with the dangers and adventures through which he had passed, and was so astonished that she hardly saw the hand he held out to her in greeting as her father pronounced her name.

"My eldest daughter, Lord Otterville," he said pleasantly, "Miss Dalrymple, otherwise Dolly—my right hand in all things."

Lord Otterville looked at the fair face of Dorothy Dalrymple, and thought what a pleasant right hand she would be for a lonely man; and then he sighed, just a little sigh to himself as she spoke, and he found that her voice was as musical as her face was beautiful.

"No nonsense," he said to himself. "No thought of it even. All women are but as statues for me, let them be ever so lovely."

"Where is Millie?" the doctor asked. "My other daughter, my lord," he added in explanation; "a spoiled child, and—oh! here she comes, not late for dinner, for a wonder."

"Talking treason, papa? I heard my name mentioned in connection with being late for dinner; it is a base libel!—I beg your pardon, I forget."

She curtsied low and gracefully as her father presented her in her turn to his guest, and Lord Otterville gazed at her in unspeakable admiration and astonishment.

He had thought Dolly handsome, and never dreamed the doctor's household could produce such a fairy vision as this bright young creature.

So innocent-looking and so lovely, she looked like a fairy vision, as she glided into the room, in her white draperies and the costume that had given Dorothy no small anxiety on account of its unconventional appearance, seemed to him the very perfection of womanly attire.

Indeed, it would have been difficult to have found anyone more gracefully and becomingly dressed than Mildred Dalrymple on this, to her, eventful day.

If her sister had been astonished at the appearance of their father's guest, she was still more so.

She hardly knew what she had expected. A long-haired creature—a cross between a game-keeper and a navvie in costume—had been something like her ideal Lord Otterville; and here he was a perfect gentleman, with no trace of the woods and wilds about him.

She was so astonished that she relapsed into complete silence as they went in to dinner, and she stared at the young man on whose arm Dorothy leaned "as if she had been going in to dinner with lords every day of her life," Millie said to herself, in a perfect maze of bewilderment. It seemed to her impossible that a man who had so recently been amongst savages could have the perfect manners of this wonderful person, who spoke and moved like a prince, and had the most beautiful eyes she had ever seen in all her life.

Millie decided that before she had been in Lord Otterville's company for five minutes,

"Eyes with a story in them," she said to her sister afterwards, in the privacy of their own sitting-room.

"Millie, my dear, whatever are you looking at?" Dr. Dalrymple said, suddenly, in the course of the dinner, which his youngest daughter seem on the point of forgetting all about.

"I didn't know I was looking at anything in particular, papa," Millie replied, blushing vehemently, for she knew she had been staring at Lord Otterville, and gone off into a sort of day-dream about him. "I believe I was thinking about Lord Otterville, and looking that way without intending to stare. I beg your pardon, my lord, if I was rude," she added, hastily; "but we have read your book, and real, live authors are rare in our circle!"

"My book and I are both honoured beyond all expression," the young man said, thinking the pretty blushing face the very loveliest he had ever seen, and losing himself in the witchery of the musical voice. "The Journal was never really intended for publication," he went on, "or it would have been very different."

"It would not have been half so delightful," Millie replied. "You would have pruned it and trimmed it, and cut out all the deliciously natural bits about—well—about everything," she added, summing up rather hastily, for Dorothy was looking somewhat displeased at her, as if she had done something wrong.

Miss Dalrymple had talked in the prettiest and most conventional fashion to their visitor. And she was rather horrified at Millie for being so very much at home with this new acquaintance, who must, of course, think her very ill bred; and to have Millie thought ill-bred, was like a reflection upon her skill as a preceptress.

There was no such thought in his head. Millie's brightness and freedom from any taint of affectation were her greatest charm where all was charming; and he was disappointed when she suddenly ceased speaking and put on a look of extreme propriety, for which he could not account.

When the two girls left the table, Miss Dalrymple took her sister somewhat to task for her careless speech about the book.

"I was afraid you were going to quote the passage we laughed at so much," she said. "And it would have been hardly seemly."

"That's just what I was going to do," Millie replied, with a laugh. "It was as well you stopped me in time, you dear old thing. Tell me, Dolly dear, what do you think of him? Is he the least little bit like what you fancied he would be?"

"Not the tiniest morsel," Miss Dalrymple replied. "I am agreeably disappointed in him."

"I am disappointed! but I don't know that it is agreeably," Millie said reflectively. "I should have liked to have seen something of the traveller, and not quite so much of the fine gentleman. It is hard to believe he has been through all that the book says. I should like to hear about it all from himself. Dorothy, what do you think he has done with his life?"

"Done with his life, child! what do you mean?"

"Just what I say, Dolly dear; there is a secret in it, a story. Look at his eyes, they are far-away looking eyes, there is sorrow in them and pain, and in his mouth too. Look at his lips, you never see that quiver that comes over them now and then, unless there has been suffering to bring it. Was it that sent him abroad, I wonder?—Lord Otterville!"

She started from her seat as she spoke the last words. Lord Otterville was looking at her from behind her sister's chair.

"I—I beg your pardon," she gasped, "I didn't know—"

"That I had come into the room? I saw you did not; pray don't look so disturbed. You were talking no treason. Dr. Dalrymple and I came to the door together, and some one called

him away. The picture here was so pretty that I walked straight up to it without the orthodox cough or footstep to announce my presence; pray pardon me."

"It's for you to pardon us, my lord," Miss Dalrymple said, annoyed beyond measure that they should have been detected talking about their guest behind his back. "My sister is impulsive, and—"

"She is everything that is amiable and charming," he said. "So you would have liked to see me in my South American get-up, Miss Millie. It would hardly have done to sit down to dinner in; there was so little of it but rags very often."

"So the book said," Millie said, bursting into inextinguishable laughter, as she remembered a passage in the volume where the traveller described himself as sitting down to repair the rents in his garments amid a circle of admiring monkeys.

"Ah! so it did," Lord Otterville replied. "On my honour, Miss Millie, I did not mean that particular passage for the public. It was a dilemma, I can assure you. I began to consider whether I could do anything with the great leaves that were all round me in the way of patching."

He broke into laughter too, and Millie kept him company heartily, in spite of a very severe look from her elder sister, who deemed her conduct indecorous in the extreme.

"Dolly, Dolly, my dear!"

Dr. Dalrymple's voice sounded in the hall, and Miss Dalrymple went out to see what he wanted.

"Dolly thinks I am behaving dreadfully," Millie said, as soon as the door closed behind her sister.

"As how?"

"Oh! she thinks it is improper to laugh on solemn occasions like drawing-room conclaves after dinner," the girl replied. "I could not help it; but I have really been very rude. How much did you hear of what I was saying when you came in, Lord Otterville?"

"Nearly all of it, I think."

"Then forgive me!" the girl said, holding out her hand with a sudden impulse. "I ought not to have spoken of you in that way. I did not know."

"Of course you did not," he said, clasping the little hand she gave him, and feeling its touch thrill through him like an electric shock. "It is I who ought to ask your pardon for coming upon you so suddenly. You were right in your conjecture—there is a story in my life, and it was the sorrow of it that sent me to the solitude of the South American forests."

CHAPTER III.

MY LITTLE DARLING.

"THE pleasantest evening I ever spent in my life," Millie said, when Lord Otterville had gone away, somewhat late, for the time had slipped by, and the Doctor had not been called out to any tiresome patient, and they had chatted about the young man's travels, and heard all sorts of wonderful things about the South American forests and the people of that curious region.

"Whatever made you go there?" Millie asked him, after hearing of privation and risk enough, as she declared, to make a person's hair stand on end.

"What makes many a man restless and wishful for change, Miss Mildred?" he replied. "I suppose I had everything that anyone could possibly want at home, and so I resolved to see what roughing it was like. I think I was always fond of roving. I had nothing to keep me in England."

"No friends?" and the girl looked up into his face, interested and sympathetic, in spite of the warning looks of her elder sister.

"Not one," was his grave reply. "I don't believe that anyone in the world is more destitute of relations and friends than I am. I am the only child of two only children, so

my kindred are all far away, as it were, and I do not make friends easily."

"How dreadful!" Millie said, impulsively. "I don't think I could live if I had not plenty of friends."

"I think I have made some to-day," he said, regarding her with admiring eyes, "if you will permit me to say so on so short an acquaintance."

"You are very good, my lord," Dr. Dalrymple said.

He liked the young man, and was glad to see him feeling at home in his house; but he thought of nothing more. He was singularly unworldly, and the notion of any entanglement arising from this introduction to his daughters never even entered his head.

"A glimpse of heaven," the young man said to himself, as he walked away from the Doctor's door into the darkness of the night. "And I must not trust myself to take too many of them. I wonder if I shall live to be old—say to three score and ten—and be to the end the lonely man I am to-night. I shall have followers enough; friends, perhaps. A fellow with unnumbered estates and a rent roll as long as his pedigree need not want for followers or pleasures; at least, pleasures that money can buy."

"Heigho! Perhaps I had better have stayed on the other side of the water. I thought when I took that home-sick fit that I would give the world almost to touch the hand of a lady again, and take my place in a London drawing-room amongst my equals once more. I have come back, and I have done it, and—bah! I am a fool."

"I had much better have stayed in South America amongst the monkeys and the wild things generally. I was safe there, I am not here. At any time the serpent may enter into my Eden and wither all the flowers with its baleful breath."

"Good Heavens, what a life is before me! I would change places with that policeman yonder, with his pound a-week or so, to have the chance of a happy home and the loving kiss of a woman's lips to help me along."

"Millie Dalrymple! A pretty name, and she is as pretty. No, that is not the word; pretty does not express her. What could express her delightful freshness and loveliness? A home with her in it, with her sweet face to greet me when I entered, to be the last to look at me when I went away!"

"Millie Dalrymple! Have I fallen in love with her, I wonder? Have I met the one woman who—I think I have. I have met her, and that is all. I must never see her again, or there will be sorrow and misery for both of us; I can bring nothing else to any woman. The more I love her, the more I shall make her suffer."

The friendship begun in the Liverpool Hotel between the Doctor and Lord Otterville grew and strengthened. The young man came again and again to the quiet house in old-fashioned, quiet Rippleworth. It was near enough to London for him to come and go, and for the Doctor and his daughters to make a little visit to his house in town, which had been swept and garnished, he told the two girls, in honour of his home-coming.

It was a handsome place in Waldemar-terrace. Just then—for some occult reason—the very best part of the West end. The houses there were not more commodious than in any other fashionable street or terrace, but society had elected that it was the thing to live there, and there was not a house to be had at any terms.

Ulric Otterville, Baron Otterville, as the Misses Dalrymple had speedily made him out in the peerage, owned one of the best houses in the row, and everything in and about it was as perfect as it could be made. Miss Dalrymple enjoyed her visit and her lunch in the beautiful house, to the very utmost. She was just the very person, she told herself privately, who would look well in a house like that; and she thought she could head an aristocratic table, and do the honours of just such

a mansion, if it would only please Providence to place her in one.

Millie looked about her in undisguised amazement at the grandeur and elegance of every appointment of the place, and rather shrank from the well-trained servants as they moved about in attendance on the party. The sisters had been ushered into a pretty suite of ladies' rooms on their arrival by a rather self-sufficient maid, who was only head house-maid at present, she informed the visitors, but who hoped for promotion to personal attendant to Lord Otterville's wife, when that lady came to rule in the household.

"Is Lord Otterville going to be married?" Millie asked in something like dismay. It would make a material difference in their pleasant intercourse if a lady made her appearance on the scene. They would not have him running down to Rippleworth at all sorts of odd times, and suggesting all manner of nice amusements.

"Of course he will marry, miss," the woman returned, looking at Millie with just the least little bit of scorn. "There is the title to be considered, and he has come home to settle down. The place has all been put in order. I expect his lordship is going to keep a very fashionable house this season."

"Oh!" was all Millie could find to say. But Miss Dalrymple asked if his lordship was engaged.

"Well, it is not officially announced, as a person might say," was the answer. "But we see a good deal here, and hear a great many things. There will be a splendid wedding before the season is over. But I couldn't undertake to name names at present."

Dorothy felt angry with herself for having put the question. What were Lord Otterville and his engagements to her. He was a nice friend to know, and she enjoyed his company—and that was all. Still the idea of his being married, and their knowing nothing about it—not even that such a thing was talked about—seemed somehow to put him very far away from them, and make them feel what a difference there was between their station and his.

Millie went down to lunch with a shadow on her pretty face. The idea of her host's marrying had given her a cold chill, like a dash of cold water.

"It will be horrid, if he does—horrid," she said to herself. "Of course his wife won't let him know a country doctor's daughters, and I am sure I shan't want to know her. She'll be a stuck-up thing, with money and a pedigree, and her nose in the air."

"I'm so glad," she said, when lunch was over, and they had adjourned to the great drawing-room, all terribly new and handsome, but lacking the charm of a woman's presence to make it homelike. Her remark seemed *apropos* of nothing, and their host looked at her with an amused face, and asked her what she was glad of. He was growing used to Millie's fragmentary speech, and liked the fun of making her explain herself.

"I am glad that lunch is over," she said laughing.

"Why, I hoped that you enjoyed it."

"So I did, I was awfully hungry. Well I was," she repeated, in reply to a look of horror from her sister. "People do get hungry when they have been going about all the morning. I enjoyed my lunch beyond everything, Lord Otterville, but I am glad to get away from the servants; they seemed everywhere like ghosts."

"It is convenient to have them everywhere," the young man replied with a smile, "and if they were not noiseless they would be a great nuisance."

"They give me the creeps," Millie said, emphatically.

"Millie!"

There was a general laugh at the horrified wrath of Miss Dalrymple's exclamation, and Millie stood to her guns.

"They did," she repeated. "One never knew exactly where they were. Now at home we

always know when our parlour-maid is in the dining-room; when she doesn't tramp she snorts, and it's convenient; there isn't always a feeling of someone superintending your proceedings from behind your back."

"I'll engage a tramping footman for the next time you honour me with a visit, Miss Millie," Lord Otterville said, looking at her with suspicious tenderness, "and have him told off specially to attend upon you. When shall it be?"

"Oh! soon," Millie replied carelessly, "before your wife comes home; you know she mightn't like it."

"My what?"

Millie sprang to her feet in horror at the effect of her words; the colour had died out of Lord Otterville's face, leaving it as ghastly as a corpse, and his voice was broken and hoarse.

"What have I said?" she exclaimed. "I was very rude, I am afraid, I—"

"Don't be frightened," their host said, turning to her. He had suddenly half hidden his face by a quick movement, as Millie started up. But he faced her now, and was his usual calm self, except that he was very pale still.

"I don't think I heard exactly what it was you said. I hope I did not startle you; it was a sudden spasm, a remnant of that illness of mine. Dr. Dalrymple, you will have to take me in hand. What did you say, Miss Millie?"

"Something very rude, my lord," Dorothy said; "it was as well you did not hear it."

"It was not rude, I am sure; I thought I caught something about my wife. Has any one been laying matrimony to my charge?"

"No, only we heard, that is, everybody says, that you will be married soon, and I said that if we came again it must be before then—that was all," Millie said, feeling as if she had been guilty of the greatest *gaucherie* and ill-breeding.

"What a mighty all," he said, smiling, rather sadly the girls thought. "I will give you due notice of the approach of the future Lady Otterville. I do not know the lady yet I think. I believe I have been married in report to nearly all the eligible girls of the season."

He did not recover his colour nor his brightness, and the doctor stayed behind to have a word with him, when the two girls went upstairs again under the guidance of the self-sufficient maid.

"He is not so strong as he looks," Dr. Dalrymple said, when he was escorting his girls to the station on their road home. "He has had these spasms quite often, he tells me. He will have to take care."

Somehow, Millie felt as if what she had said had done something to do with it, and she felt very guilty, and longed to see him again, that she might make amends if it were possible. She recalled what she had heard of his proposed marriage before he went abroad, and concluded she had touched some tender string.

Three weeks later she was sitting alone in their pretty morning-room. Her sister was out, and her father busy in his study, when a ring at the bell roused her from the novel she was devouring, and made her wonder who it was that had come.

"Visitors are a nuisance," she said to herself, "at least, some of them;" and as she thought it the door opened, and Lord Otterville came in. She jumped up at the sight of him—he was so changed since that day when they had lunched at his house. He was wan and worn looking, as if from want of sleep, and his face was haggard and grey. He looked ten years older, and there was an expression of suffering on his features that made the tears start to her eyes at the sight of it.

"Lord Otterville," she exclaimed, "what is it? What has happened?"

"I am going away," he said hoarsely. "No, don't call anyone just yet," he added hastily, as she would have touched the bell and sent for her father. "Let me speak, let me look

you for one minute, and dream of what might have been, Millie. My little darling, I must speak now the words I never should have dared to utter, but that we shall meet no more. I love you, my own—love you as never woman was loved before in this world. And we must part, Millie, we must part."

Was he mad, or was she dreaming? Millie felt like someone under a spell, as he gathered her in his arms and kissed her upturned face with passion and pain commingled. And she did not repulse him, and knew now that the strange joy that had filled her heart of late was love—love of him—and he had come to tell her that they must meet no more.

CHAPTER IV.

A BLISSFUL DREAM.

MILLIE felt the clasping and the kisses like a girl in a dream, and only knew she was unutterably happy, even with the knowledge that the man who had spoken such burning words to her, and held her in his arms as if she were all the world to him, was going away.

Ay, he had said it; she had heard the words, and they had sent a strange pang into her heart even before he had told her he loved her.

Going away! The world would be blank, indeed, without his dear presence. But she would have the knowledge that he loved her, and the thought that he would come back. He would surely come back if she was all in all to him, as he said? After a few agitated moments she found her tongue.

"Going away, Lord Otterville?" she said. "When? Where? Ah! don't go; what shall we do without you?"

"You will miss me, Millie, my own darling!—I will call you so in this last moment—look at me and tell me that you will think of me when I am gone; that sometimes I shall be in your thoughts, child! Don't look so frightened; I would not harm you, but I am going, Millie, and I had to speak, or my heart would have burst, I think!"

Still he held her close to his breast, and Millie burst into tears and clung to him, for she felt that some calamity—she could not guess what, was impending—and she knew now how she loved him.

"Let me call papa," she said faintly. "You must not talk to me like this, Lord Otterville. It is not right!"

She was trying to think what Dorothy would have done in similar circumstances, and searching her thoughts for proper sayings and suitable words, and she failed signally, poor child, because her heart interfered, and her rebuking speeches were stiff and unnatural.

"Not right, my darling? Not right to speak the love that has filled my heart for you from the first moment of our meeting—in this very room, wasn't it, Millie? Not right? Ah Heaven! you are wiser than I, my own! It is wrong, and I must go. Say good-bye to them for me, Millie. Tell the Doctor I am not the ungrateful hound he will think me. There is nothing for me to do but go!"

"But where are you going, and why?" Millie asked through her tears. "I do not understand!"

"Heaven forbid that you should, my innocent darling!" the young man said. "Pray for me, Millie; if there is any truth in prayers I shall need all yours. Think of me sometimes, wandering in the pathless solitudes I ought never to have left; and think always, come what will, that Ulric Otterville loves you as a man loves only once in his life! Good-bye, my darling; I dare not stay, lest I bring upon you the curse that has fallen upon me. It may have followed me here for aught I know."

"You will come back?" Millie said, wondering at his wild words, and staying him as

he would have rushed away. "It is not to be good-bye for ever, Lord Otterville?"

"Call me by my name, Millie. Let me hear it from your lips once before I go. Say Ulric, I love you! It will be like a whisper from Heaven to take with me into my exile!"

And with his arms around her, his lips almost touching hers, Millie Dalrymple repeated the words after him, and felt his passionate kisses on her upturned face.

She felt him moan and shiver as he clasped her, as if with an agony too great for words; and then the room seem to darken and everything to grow cold and chill, and she was alone with her misery, and the knowledge that the brightness and sunshine had all gone out of her young life.

She laid her head on the end of the couch where she was sitting, and cried as if her heart would break.

She did not understand it in the least. She only knew that Lord Otterville was gone, and that he had told that he loved her, and she had let him see that she loved him too.

"Millie, what on earth is the matter?"

Miss Dalrymple had returned home and sought her sister in their own sitting-room in vain. She was usually there at this time of the day, making what litter she chose with her various occupations. A litter was Millie's delight Dorothy used to say, and it was something out of the common not to find her in the midst of one.

It was more curious still to discover her in the room below crying. Millie, who hated tears and their traces, and opined that weeping was nonsense, and hysterics were not to be tolerated.

"Whatever ails you, child?" she asked, alarmed at her sister's appearance. "Are you ill?"

"No!" And Millie sat up and strove to check her sobs, in which she succeeded but partially.

"Then what has happened? Have you and papa fallen out?"

"I have not seen papa since you went out, Dolly. Lord Otterville has been here, and—"

"And what?" "He is going away," and Millie's sobs burst forth again. She had not quite mastered herself yet.

"Dear me," Miss Dalrymple said. She was taken aback by the unexpected news, but she would not have owned to any emotion for the world.

"Where is he going to?"

"I don't know!"

"What is he going away for? He has not long returned to England. I suppose it is only for a short time?"

"I think it is for always, Dolly."

"Going away for ever?" Miss Dalrymple said, in amazement. "What are you talking of, child? Why, it was only the day before yesterday that he told papa he was not going to leave England again; and he has had all his places done up for residing in. You must be a little cracked, Millie!"

"He is mad, I think!" Millie replied; and then she told her sister as much of what had passed as she could, without revealing what Lord Otterville had said to her of his love for her. Dorothy listened wondering.

"Heyday, what is the matter?" asked Dr. Dalrymple, entering unperceived by either of his daughters. "What has gone wrong, Millie? Has the canary bird had a fit, or the cat sat down on the new hat, or what?"

"I don't know," Dorothy said, while Millie's emotion broke out afresh at the sight of her father. "I have only just come in, and she says that Lord Otterville has gone mad, and has been here to say good-bye to us, though he seems to have confined his attentions to her alone."

There was a little acrimony in her words. She wished devoutly she had been at home to receive his lordship. She would have understood what it all meant, and would not have

dissolved into weeping like this silly young sister of hers.

Doctor Dalrymple sat down by Millie, and soothed her. He saw that she was frightened and agitated, and he managed to get from her a much more coherent account of what had passed than she had given Dorothy; but still she did not say a word about the love-making that was between herself and the absent man.

"Are you sure you are not mistaken, my dear?" the Doctor asked, when he had heard it all. "There was not a word about it yesterday when I met his lordship in town. He was speaking of things he intended to do in Waldemar-terrace. He can't be going away!"

"He is, papa," Millie said. "You will see!"

They did see, to their great astonishment and sorrow. The next day brought them presents all round, and a note of good-bye to the doctor. Not a word of the reason that had led to this sudden determination, but a note fraught with unuttered sorrow.

"I shall go to town to-morrow," the Doctor said, "and see if I can hear anything. Our intimacy with his lordship warrants our inquiring, at least if any misfortune has befallen him."

He went, but for all the information he gathered he might as well have stayed at home. Lord Otterville's lawyers could tell him nothing. His lordship had given his orders with regard to the arrangement of things during his absence, but had not entered into any particulars. They could give no explanation of his conduct. He had doubtless strong reasons for acting as he did, and was certainly in full possession of his senses, but he had kept his motives secret. They judged that he was going to make a long stay abroad from the arrangements he had made about his property.

At Waldemar-terrace the Doctor learned no more. All was in confusion there; servants being paid off, and packing up going on; and disheartened, and feeling curiously downhearted, he returned home. Their friend was gone, and a strange blank seemed to have come in their midst. Miss Dalrymple wondered exceedingly, and Millie was very silent on the subject, but she treasured a little note that had come to her within two days after that memorable parting, and wept over it in secret with passionate longing; for she knew now that she loved Lord Otterville very dearly, and she knew, too, that she should never see him again.

"Forgive me my darling!" the scrap of paper said, "if I frightened you or made you unhappy. I had to speak, Millie, or I think I should have died. It is cruel to say it now when we are parted by an inexorable fate, but while my life shall last I shall love you, and you only, my bright-eyed angel! We shall never meet again Millie—never—never—unless—no, there is no unless—Heaven will not be so merciful. Good-bye, my own love; we may know in another world why the fates were so hard upon us in this one."

This incoherent fragment had been delivered to Millie by a messenger who said Lord Otterville had given it to him himself, and she treasured and wept over it in many sleepless hours of the night.

She grew very quiet after Lord Otterville went away. The bright, mischievous Millie Dalrymple had given place to a silent, rather pale girl who rarely smiled. Somehow her father and sister did not connect the change with its real cause, or if Miss Dalrymple had an inkling of the true state of affairs she wisely held her tongue.

The Doctor was anxious about his child, but Millie declared she was quite well, that nothing ailed her. Certainly, for a person that ailed nothing she was curiously delicate and fragile; she was inert and listless, and seemed to have no spirit for anything. Her thoughts were constantly with Lord Otterville, wondering where he was, what he was doing, picturing him undergoing all sorts of privations—being killed by savages, or lying dead in a crackless

forest such as he had described to her more than once. Oh! if she could only know what had become of him this weary sorrow would not feel so dreadful; even if he had married someone else and forgotten her, she would be better than in this state of utter ignorance concerning him.

They took her to the seaside. Her father said she wanted bracing, but the strength did not come back, and the moaning sea and the howling wind set her wondering whether Ulric Otterville was lying drowned anywhere under the deep, dark water; and, on the whole, the trip did more harm than good, and they returned to Rippleworth, and people began to opine that the youngest Miss Dalrymple "was going into a decline, poor dear!"

Six months had passed away, and not a word had been heard of Lord Otterville; at least not by his friends at Rippleworth. If his lawyers had any information they kept it to themselves, and Dr. Dalrymple began to fancy that the young man must be dead. His elder daughter shared his opinion, but Millie had never a word to say on the subject.

"I think I should know if he were dead," she said to herself, in the solitude of her own room. "I think he would tell me. How long will it last, I wonder? Shall I live to be an old woman, seventy years old, and never known what has become of him, my darling, my love? Ah, no! I could not live it! Heaven would be merciful, and let me die if I am never to see him again!"

She had a sleepless night, poor child, after listening to a conversation between her father and sister about Lord Otterville—a night of nightmare and miserable fancies, always wandering in the dark after the man she loved and had lost, and never being able to come up with him; and she rose more faded and wan than ever, and looking, as her sister declared to her father, as if she were going straight into her grave.

"I will take her to London to Greatorex," the Doctor said, naming a celebrated physician, who was also a friend of his own. "He may be able to suggest something. Where is she?"

"In the morning-room, papa she was asleep; I think."

"Ah, well, let her be. I will see about going up with her this afternoon. I know exactly when to catch Greatorex."

He went about his business, and Miss Dalrymple about hers; and Millie lay on the sofa wishing that she could die. She felt so weak and miserable, and in the midst of it there came a ring at the bell and a quick foot-step, and a voice she knew.

"I can find my way," it said. "Tell them I am here, will you?" and the tread came closer, and she was gathered into the embrace of a pair of manly arms, and kisses were laid upon her cheek; and the voice she had pined for was sounding in her ears.

"Darling, I have come back! The clouds are all cleared away. Millie, my own darling, nothing can come between us now!"

CHAPTER V. IN PARADISE.

DOCTOR DALRYMPLE went about his work with a very heavy heart. He was really anxious about Millie. He loved his youngest child with a passionate tenderness, born of that sorrowful time when he had stood by his wife's death-bed, and thought that the world would never more hold a gleam of brightness for him.

She was fading away before his eyes, and he never thought of the real reason. She had always seemed so perfectly at home with their guest, and so unconstrained in her intercourse with him, that no thought of love-making had ever entered the Doctor's head. He only thought of consumption and physical ailments, and cast about in his mind which doctor he should take her to.

There was a doctor already had he but known

it, and Millie's illness was fast disappearing under his magic treatment. He could not give her back the strength that she had lost, poor child! But the brightness had come into her eyes again, and the colour to her cheeks.

The Doctor might well stare when he opened the door of the little room, where he had left her lying on the sofa—white and wan. She was standing up, her face hidden on the breast of a man who was holding her tightly clasped in his arms.

"Millie!" he exclaimed, and the stranger turned and disclosed the features of the lost Lord Otterville.

"I couldn't help it!" that young gentleman said, not loosing his hold of the weeping girl, for Millie's tears had come and saved her from a fit of hysterics. "I wanted to see you all so much, and—"

"Millie, especially, it seems to me," the Doctor said, shaking the hand the young man held out, and feeling somehow as if a long-lost son had come back again.

"Yes, Millie especially. I want her for my wife. Will you give her to me, Dr. Dalrymple?"

"That is a momentous question to ask in a hurry," the Doctor said, sitting down beside Millie, who nestled up to him, and laid her head on his shoulder.

She was almost overcome by the joyful excitement, and could hardly believe yet that she was not dreaming.

"It does not seem in a hurry to me!" Lord Otterville said, looking at Millie with eager eyes. "I have been longing to ask it ever since the day I dined here first; but I could not. There were reasons. The impediments are all cleared away now, and I am here to beg for my wife. Say you will give her to me, doctor? We love each other."

It was a brusque avowal of love, but somehow Dr. Dalrymple knew it was sincere. He could not answer in a moment, and said so. The position to which Millie would be raised was so much above their own that he had his doubts, as any sensible father would have, of the suitability of the match; and the utmost he would promise was that he must have a month to consider of it, and be allowed to make what inquiries he liked beforehand.

"It sounds rude, though I do not mean it to be so," he said. "I think I have a right to ask where have you been all these months, Lord Otterville?"

"At Athens most of the time. Travelling in Asia Minor the rest. I can give you my whole tour!"

"And why did you go away? I have all sorts of reasons suggested for your sudden disappearance—losses at play, and so forth."

"Not one of which is true, Dr. Dalrymple. I went because I had to go; but there was nothing to be ashamed of in my motives. I can honestly say that there is nothing in my past life that should prevent my marrying any girl. I could not speak to one so pure as my darling here with any tinge of shame or sin upon my conscience."

The first thing Miss Dalrymple heard, when she entered the house, after her visits, was the sound of the piano in the drawing-room, dumb this many a day, as far as Millie was concerned. And the first thing she saw, on going into the room, was Lord Otterville lounging in an easy chair, as if he had never been away, and Millie daintily attired, singing to him one of the old familiar songs that she had not sung since they had lost sight of him. She stopped with a half-frightened exclamation.

"No! you are wide awake. It isn't a dream," his lordship said, sitting up, and facing her, with a comical smile. "Sister that is to be, say you are glad to see me?"

And before the astonished elder sister had recovered from her amazement he had caught her in his arms, and kissed her, as if it were the most correct thing in the world to do.

"I didn't mean to frighten you," he said when he released her. "But I am too happy

for anything, Miss Dalrymple. Behold the son of the house!"

"What do you mean?" she asked, sitting down, and staring at him in bewilderment. "And where have you been? and what have you done to Millie? She looks like a different girl!"

"Because the right doctor has come to her, I mean that I am going to marry her with your father's good leave, and I have all but obtained that. I have been in Greece and Asia Minor, because—on business that is; but have come back now to settle down, and never want to rove any more unless my wife roves with me."

Society in Rippleworth was stirred to its deepest foundation when the news that Lord Otterville had come back, and was going to marry Millie Dalrymple, leaked out. The doctor could find no flaw in the young man's character. He had only gone away somewhat suddenly, and long journeys and unheeded ramblings in all sorts of queer places were rather fashionable amongst the young men of the day.

Millie kept her own counsel about that last passionate interview, when he had bidden her good-bye for ever, and seemed almost broken-hearted at the thought of their separation. Whatever had been the cause, it was all removed now, and he was never going to leave her any more.

The month that the Doctor had bargained for flew rapidly away, and he found out nothing to the discredit of his future son-in-law; on the contrary, everything pertaining to his affairs was in perfect order, and Millie would be a rich woman.

The wedding was to be absurdly soon, Miss Dalrymple declared. Lord Otterville would only give them a month to get everything ready in. The lawyers would take that time to do their part of the business, and Millie needn't buy anything but her wedding-gown. They could get everything they wanted when they were travelling—there were shops every where.

"As if a young lady could go away from home without a proper trousseau," Dorothy said indignantly, when Millie opined that such a proceeding would be delightful.

"Fancy not having anything to put on till one went and bought it?" that young lady said all her old sauciness had come back to her now. "It would be too funny. I vote for Ulric's plan, Dolly. Give me some money instead of all these heaps of things, and let me fit myself out in Paris."

"You don't know what you are talking about, child," Miss Dalrymple said seriously. "Lord Otterville talks like a man; men don't understand these things."

"Neither do I, not having been married," said the incorrigible Millie. "Dolly, I shall never wear out all these things, not if I live to be a hundred. What is the use of it all? When the old gardener's daughter was married she had two of everything—one to wash, and one to wear, her mother told me. Why can't I do like that—there would be ever so less to take about?"

"Really, Millie, you might be a day-labourer's daughter," Dorothy said, half-angrily, for she had a supreme reverence for the proprieties of life. "You have no idea of the fitness of things!"

"No, I haven't a bit," was Millie's retort, and her sister gave her up as incorrigible, and proceeded with the preparations as if they were for herself, and consulted Millie no more.

It was a very quiet wedding—too quiet by half, the Rippleworth people said. They would have liked to see the Doctor's daughter married with all the pomp and circumstance that befitted a real live lord.

Millie looked very pretty in her simple dress of white satin, and the handsome lace veil her lover had presented to her amongst other things.

He had loaded her with presents, and Dorothy would have had them all spread out

for the admiring eyes of their visitors, but Millie would have none of it.

He had given them to her, she declared, and she was not going to have all the town gossips handling them and staring at them. She should never care for them afterwards.

So the wedding presents were not exhibited, and envious folks said it was because there was none to show, and Miss Dalrymple's heart was vexed and her temper stirred ever so little by her sister's wilfulness.

Lord Otterville's lawyer came to his wedding, and a chosen friend or two; but there was no fashionable mob to crush out all natural feeling, and Millie was allowed to cry her fill on her father's shoulder when the time came for them to part, and was taken away a very white-faced and red-eyed little bride to start on her life's journey with the man she loved.

"A thoroughly satisfactory match!" the lawyer said to Dr. Dalrymple, as the pair sat together after the guests had departed.

There were some little matters to settle between them, and he was the Doctor's guest for the night.

"Yea," Dr. Dalrymple replied. "My little girl will be happy, I think."

"I am sure she will. I never knew a more amiable young fellow than Otterville. He is steady, rich, and generous; three most estimable qualities."

"Generous, indeed! He has made Millie a rich woman, whatever happens to him."

"He can very well afford it," the man of law said, with a smile. "Three thousand a year out of his estates is not ruin. He has been more particular than most men are in seeing that it was absolutely settled upon herself. Nothing can take it from her; it is hers to do as she likes with from this day."

"There seemed to me something of presentiment about his eagerness to have it arranged," the Doctor said, "as if he feared something might happen to take it from her."

"Nothing is likely to happen. He is as healthy a young fellow as ever lived. It is only his love for his pretty wife that has prompted him. You are feeling her loss, and see things in a dismal light."

"There is something in that. I cannot tell anyone what the loss of Milly will be to me. Sometimes I wish that he had never come near my house; but I suppose someone else would have taken her away in time."

"Yes; and the other someone might not have been almost the richest peer in the kingdom," the lawyer said, with a little laugh. "You are a lucky man, believe me, Doctor."

The honeymoon was to be passed on the Continent. Millie had not seen anything except a very little of her native land, and they were going to do all the conventional tourist places, and see everything there was to be seen.

It was great fun, Lord Otterville wrote, to see Millie's costar. They had roamed through France, and were trying Germany, as Millie wrote; and the honeymoon that was to have been six weeks had lengthened out into two months, and still they were not talking of returning.

They would be back for Christmas, they promised, they must spend Christmas together; but they were going farther afield first—into Italy, perhaps as far as Naples, and thought of coming home by sea.

"They are just crazy with their happiness, and have more money than they know what to do with," the Doctor said, when he read the announcement. "Who ever heard of anyone knocking about the Continent at this time of year? I hope they will settle down like Christian folks when they do come home."

The first week in December, the young couple declared, should see the end of their wanderings, and November had come in fine and clear, as if on purpose for their pleasure. Millie wrote from Rome in high delight, and then the usual time elapsed, and there was no letter from her.

They were travelling, and writing was diffi-

cult, the Doctor and his daughter said to themselves; but they grew uneasy when several days more went by, and there was no letter.

Dr. Dalrymple ran up to town, and interviewed the lawyer.

"He was not at all anxious," he informed Millie's father. "There was literally nothing for his lordship to write to them about. He was amply supplied with circular notes and money, and Lady Otterville had been provided with a half-year's allowance."

"A dreadful waste of money," the Doctor said. "What will Millie do with so much? Then you can tell me nothing?"

"Nothing at all; but I am sure there is no cause for uneasiness. We should have heard any bad news."

The Doctor was not satisfied, and telegraphed to the last address he had for news of the young couple.

The answer came back promptly and disappointingly. Lord and Lady Otterville had left Rome, and nothing was known of their whereabouts.

"I shall go and search for them, and find out what it means," the Doctor said to his daughter, when another week had passed by, and no news came of the husband and wife. "There is something wrong."

And as he spoke there was a knock at the door, and a servant entered with a telegram.

"News at last!" he said, and this was what he read:—

"Hotel of the Golden Heart, Aushaffenburg, Bavaria.—A lady named Otterville is lying dangerously ill in my house."

"ROSENBLATT, Landlord."

CHAPTER VI.

BREASTING THE STORM.

To dash messages right and left, to the lawyer in London, and to a trusty ally, to come and take care of his practice, was the work of a very short time, and Dr. Dalrymple and his daughter were equipped and ready for their start for Aushaffenburg. Whatever could Millie be doing at that out-of-the-way Bavarian town, for that it was Millie neither of them doubted for a moment. Dangerously ill, and not a line from her husband to tell them of it!

The lawyer could tell them nothing, he had not heard from Lord Otterville. It was a little odd that his lordship had not written to them, but there was nothing requiring his attention, and his client was not given to writing when he was away from England. He sincerely trusted that they would find it was someone else who was ill, and not Lady Otterville. But he thought it as well that they should go and see. He offered to accompany them, but Dr. Dalrymple said he would communicate with him directly he arrived at his destination. He felt if there was anything terrible to hear he would rather meet his daughter alone, if, indeed, he met her alive. The message had said "Dangerously ill," and he dreaded that he might find it had terminated fatally before he had time to reach her.

It was a very weak and changed Millie that the father and daughter found at the hotel of the Golden Heart—a wan, wasted creature, who knew nobody, and could only toss her head wearily from side to side, and moan inarticulately. The landlord had not much to tell. The lady had come there a week since with the maid who was in attendance on her now, and she had hardly been in the house a day before she fell ill, and had to send for a doctor. There was no English doctor in the place, and they had done their best. But the maid could not tell anything about her mistress; she had only been with her a few days, and he had taken the liberty, with the doctor's sanction, of looking amongst her belongings to see if there was any clue to who or what she was. He had found the address of Dal-

rymple repeated a good many times, and he had thought it better to telegraph, in case the lady might belong to him.

"She is my daughter," the Doctor said, feeling as if he were listening to some wild romance. "I am Dr. Dalrymple. This," indicating poor Millie, "is Lady Otterville. But where is her husband—where is Lord Otterville?"

The landlord shrugged his shoulders. No one had come with the lady, he said. But for her maid she had been alone.

The attendant was a neat-looking German woman, who spoke a little English; she knew nothing. She had been sent for to an hotel in Ingoldstadt less than a fortnight ago, to see a lady. The landlady of the hotel knew that she was in want of a situation, and the lady seemed so pleasant and gentle, that she advised her to take the situation. The lady had arrived alone. It was understood that her maid, who had travelled with her, had been suddenly summoned away. From all she saw, Madame was in some trouble, and she felt very sorry for her. She was a gentle, kind young lady, and she could not leave her alone to die, perhaps in a strange hotel, though everybody was very good to her.

"But her husband," Dr. Dalrymple said, every word that was spoken adding to his bewilderment and consternation. "Where is he?"

"I have seen no husband," the woman said. "Madame has never spoken to me of one."

"They were on their honeymoon tour," the Doctor said. "What terrible mystery is this?"

He telegraphed to the lawyer in London to come to him if possible, and to the English Consul at Rome for any news concerning the movements of the young pair in that city, which was the last place he had had letters from.

From the London lawyer he received a wire, saying he was starting, and would be with him as fast as rail and steam would bring him. From the latter a message to the effect that Lord and Lady Otterville and suite left Rome on a date a fortnight before the one the woman named as that on which she was engaged by her mistress.

It was all a tangle, and it seemed as if Millie would sink into her grave without being able to speak a word in explanation.

The German doctor was delighted to have some of the responsibility taken off his hands. He and the landlord had discovered that Millie was well supplied with money, but they were honest men, both of them, and they would not rob her of a penny. And to know that her father and sister were with her was a great relief to them.

There was nothing for it but to wait and hope that she would battle successfully with the disease, and use what means they might to keep her strength up.

"Who is Ulric?" the German doctor asked, as they watched together by her side.

"Her husband."

"Ah! she had one, then? Sometimes I thought it was so, but I could not be sure. She was already half delirious when they called me in. Is he dead?"

"I hope not! I hope to Heaven not!" Dr. Dalrymple said in dismay. "He should be with her; it is their wedding-tour, poor child!"

"She has lost him, I fear," the German gentleman said gravely. "She is quiet now from weakness, but up to yesterday it was painful to hear her wail constantly for 'Ulric,' and wait that she had lost him, that she should never see him again, and more that was incoherent—something about bears and South America, which we could not understand."

"We understand, my daughter and I," Dr. Dalrymple said. "My poor darling, I am bewildered, and do not know what to do!"

"Sleep on it all," the German doctor said, "she will not change to-night, or I have no knowledge of disease. You are worn out with your journey, and she is well watched."

If you will allow me I will stay with her and see the night through."

Dr. Dalrymple and Dorothy, too, were as he said, travel worn, and they availed themselves of his offer, and left Millie in charge of her former guardians.

In the small hours the doctor was awakened by a light touch on his arm. His senses were alert in a moment, and he saw the German doctor standing by his bedside.

"Come," he said, in a low tone, "as lightly as you can; there is a change."

"Is she dying?"

"No. It is for the better so far, but the slightest thing may transform it into mischief. But you know; I need not tell you."

There was a change, inasmuch as the restless head was still and the glittering eyes had reason in them; and Dr. Dalrymple stole softly to the bedside, fearing lest his very presence might be too much.

But Millie was too near the threshold of the other world to feel anything like surprise. She feebly smiled when she saw him as if she had been expecting him, and her wan lips framed his name.

"Papa," she said, and he bent down and kissed her. "Have they told you?" she whispered. "He is dead," and, then as if exhausted with the effort of speaking, she fell asleep.

It was refreshing sleep, and she woke able to speak again, and to feel a certain amount of wonder at the sight of her father and sister.

But another day passed before they could as much as ask her a question. They wondered at her calmness, but her feet were yet hovering on the confines of the next world, and she was unable to feel either sorrow or joy very deeply. As yet she looked like someone who had come through a fiery furnace of trial, as indeed they found she had.

Before she could talk to them the lawyer came from London, and had a talk with Dr. Dalrymple, but he could tell nothing. Like him, he had not heard from Lord Otterville, but had no idea that anything was wrong. He had almost come to the conclusion that the young couple had suddenly returned to England, for one of his clerks had come in with the announcement that he had run up against Lord Otterville's own man in the street.

"He may have returned, but my poor girl has not," the Doctor said. "I cannot make it out."

"Nor I," was the lawyer's reply. "It is very strange; but, thank Heaven, Lady Otterville will be able to explain."

Alas! there was no explanation. Two more days, and Millie, faint and feeble, but brought back to life, was strong enough to tell what had befallen her, but all she could tell was that she knew her husband was dead.

Little by little they got at the sad story; they had been very happy and gay in Rome, and nothing had happened to mar their felicity, and they had come northward, straying hither and thither as their fancy led them.

At Munich, he had been going to take her to see the famous brewery, and had been laughing as he told her what a queer place it was, and how the people congregated there in crowds. He had gone out to see about a carriage, and to post some letters, leaving her alone for a few minutes. She was without a maid. The one she had engaged had proved herself very unsatisfactory, and she was looking out for a suitable person when it all happened.

He came in, looking very white and wild, and she would have gone to him and caressed him, but he waved her off, and seemed almost out of his senses. Then he went into his own room at the hotel, and was there for some minutes, and she heard the opening and shutting of drawers; then there was silence, and she was waiting to hear him speak to her, when a waiter entered with a packet and a note.

Dr. Dalrymple read it with unbounded astonishment, and not the smallest notion of what it meant. It was written as if Lord

Otterville's brain had turned under the pressure of strong excitement, and was wild and incoherent.

"My DARLING," it ran. "My own darling, you will see me no more; pity me, forgive me, and forget me. I dare not trust myself to see you again. I dare not look into your sweet eyes, or I should forget my resolution, and wrong you more than I have done already. My own Millie, shall we meet in the next world, I wonder? Will evil destiny pursue us there, and stand between us like an avenging fiend? Go home, my own sweet Millie. Under the protecting shelter of your father's roof you may learn to forgive the wretch who has blasted your life."

"What do you make of it?" asked the Doctor, when they had read the strange notes.

"Madness?"

"No."

"What then?"

"A woman."

"Do you know of one? Has there been any entanglement in his life?"

"None that I know of; I speak from conviction. Whenever a man's life is spoiled a woman is at the bottom of it, somehow. H'm! a will!" he added, turning over the papers, which had been the contents of the parcel left for Millie, "and all the money he could get together. By Heaven, she may be right and he is dead; but he must be found, dead or alive."

"He is dead," Millie reiterated, when she could sit up and think over what had befallen her. "I knew it from the very first, papa; he went to his death when he went out of that house; I never saw him again!"

"Why did you not come straight home, my child?" the Doctor asked. "Much valuable time has been lost by your delay."

"I don't know," Millie said, sadly. "I did start, and then I felt as if I could not bear to face you all; I would be lost, I thought. I meant to go to Rome again, and then I think I grew homesick after all, but I was getting dazed and stupid. I remember engaging a maid at Ingoldstadt, but after that all is very confused and muddled. I think I told her I must push on to England, and I suppose we got here somehow, I don't know!"

The maid could tell more about her mistress's proceedings than she knew herself. Millie had not seemed to be at all delirious, she said, on the way to Aushaffenburg, but she had looked so weary that they had thought it best to stop a little while, and she had fallen ill almost directly. She had not told her anything about herself, nor where she was going, but she had given her some money, and begged her to remain with her.

There was no clue, not the faintest. Lord Otterville and his man had both disappeared, and it came into Dr. Dalrymple's mind more than once that perhaps the servant had made away with his master; but all doubt on that point was entirely set at rest by the appearance of the man himself the day after they reached Rippleworth. He had heard he was being inquired for, he said, and came to answer any questions they liked to ask him.

He had left Lord Otterville suddenly, certainly, but there had been nothing particularly strange in the manner of his leaving. His lordship had dismissed him, but with a good character, and had bid him refer anyone to his lawyers if anything more was wanted. This was all he knew. If he had had any idea that his wife had been left in Munich unprotected he would have communicated with the lawyer or Dr. Dalrymple at once; he was utterly in the dark as to what had become of his master.

No advertisements or search—and the latter was vigorously instituted immediately—served to throw any light on what had happened, and Dr. Dalrymple came to look upon his child as a widow, and to think that in very deed his son-in-law was no more.

CHAPTER VII.

A RAY OF LIGHT.

A WIDOW indeed was poor, broken, worn-out Millie when her father and sister were able to take her back to England, saved from the immediate danger of the fever which had seized her, but in imminent risk of sinking into her grave from exhaustion and sorrow.

No tidings had come of the missing Lord Otterville—not a sign to tell that he was either dead or alive. The only conclusion that could be come to was that he had met his death somewhere by accident, or had been made away with, either by mistake, or in the hope of plunder.

To the best of Millie's belief he had a large sum of money about him when he went out the last time she saw him. She knew he had been cashing some notes, and making preparations for their further journey.

She did not think the wild note he wrote her had anything to do with money, and up to that time there had not been the shadow of a cloud on their happiness.

She recalled every little thing that had happened to them in Munich; every word she had heard her husband utter during their stay in that old city.

There had been nothing to account for his agitation that day that she knew of. The post had brought them nothing; she had been with him when he had received his letters.

The only worry they had had was over the unsuitability of the maid that had been provided for Lady Otterville.

She had been found helplessly intoxicated when she should have been attending to her mistress, and under such circumstances as plainly showed that the habit was a confirmed one secretly indulged, and there had been nothing for it but instant dismissal.

Millie had been rather amused at her husband's distress at the fact of her having to put up with the assistance of hotel servants till she should be suited again.

She rather liked waiting on herself, and it hurt her dignity not one whit to be without a maid.

The lawyer, pushing his inquiries as far as possible, learned one fact, viz., that someone had called at the hotel after Millie had left, and asked for Lord Otterville.

It was a woman, who gave no name, and being told of his sudden disappearance she had laughed and declared she could wait; she should see him again some time.

No one knew her except one of the under-waiters, who declared she was Mademoiselle Blumendorf, the principal dancer at the theatre where a Viennese troupe was at that time performing.

The man had doubtless been deceived by a fancied resemblance. Mademoiselle Blumendorf being traced and written to, disclaimed all knowledge of Lord Otterville or the hotel where he had stayed, and the little apparent clue showed a broken end that could not be joined to anything else.

There was nothing for it but to wait. The next heir, a distant cousin of the missing man, would fain have had his relative declared dead, and taken possession of all he could; but the lawyers were cautious, and would do nothing without proof.

There would not be much but the title and the absolutely tied-up estates for anyone. The will, which Lord Otterville had left with his wife, and which was duly signed and sealed, gave her everything, with a curious exactness of wording that made it impossible for her to be kept out of her own.

She was rich enough without it—rich beyond the wildest dreams of her girlhood—and she would not hear of touching anything. She would never have a penny, she declared, when she had grown strong enough to think and talk for herself. She had enough, and nothing could give him back to her.

It was several months before her mind quite recovered its tone; but life came to have a new interest for her, and she knew that by-and-by

a little child would lie upon her bosom and call her mother.

Her father and sister watched over her with untiring interest and affection.

The doctor was keenly alive to the interests that would be involved and the complications that might arise if the baby were a boy. With no proof of his father's death he would not be Lord Otterville, and who was to decide when the title could be taken? If the child were a girl the lawyers would have to make suitable provision out of the estate. It was a tangled web, and, worse than all, there was the risk to Millie's life in her coming trial.

He was terribly afraid she might succumb, she had been so prostrated. But the prospect seemed to renovate her shattered health rather than damage it.

Dr. Dalrymple resolved to give up his practice at Rippleworth, and live at the seaside with his daughters. He was well able to afford to retire, and Millie was independent. So Hastings was selected as likely to suit Lady Otterville, and thither they repaired, and time went by and a little son was laid in Millie's arms, and those that loved her so well were happy in the knowledge that she was as well as could be hoped for, and happy and content in her new blessing.

She never spoke of her husband. Somehow her lips seemed sealed on the subject, and they never knew exactly what she thought about his disappearance.

Her recovery was quick, and she was soon about, with her baby always with her.

She seemed to grudge even its nurse the necessary attendance upon it, and would have made herself a perfect slave to the little creature had not her father stepped in and forbade it.

She grew composed and quietly happy in her fresh source of brightness, and the lawyer came down from London and interviewed her on the subject of her boy, and the provision that ought to be made for him out of the property, but she would not have it.

"I want him to be all mine," she said. "Leave him alone; he is my baby, not Lord Otterville, and we want nothing—he and I."

It was very true, they did not; and it was deemed best to say nothing more at present. When the time came for the child to be educated then they would see.

The baby was six months old and Millie was in ecstasies over the cutting of his first tooth—an event of far more importance than the threatened war that was impending over Europe.

Then Dr. Dalrymple read in a London paper of the advent of a celebrated danseuse at one of the London theatres.

"Mademoiselle Blumendorf," he read.

"Is not that the woman that came to the hotel to ask for Ulric?" Millie said, starting up. "I shall go to London and see her!"

"My dear child," the Doctor said, vexed with himself for having mentioned the name, "you will do nothing of the sort. It was all a mistake; the lady had nothing to do with it."

But Millie declared that she would go, whether he chose to go with her or not; and he thought it best to agree, only stipulating that they should put it off for a day or two, and communicate with the lawyer first.

The next morning's papers were full of reports of a terrible accident that had happened at the theatre where Mademoiselle Blumendorf was appearing for the first time. The drop scene had given way and come down, striking the unfortunate dancer, and injuring her severely.

Scarcely an hour after reading the story of the accident a telegram was put into Dr. Dalrymple's hands from the lawyer.

"Come here without a moment's delay, and bring Lady Otterville with you. Important news."

Doctor Dalrymple telegraphed what train they would go by, and the lawyer met them at the station.

"Is he found?" Millie gasped, as he helped her out of the carriage, for there was some-

thing in his face that spoke of agitation and perplexity.

"No; but the cause of his disappearance is. Will you come to the poor woman who was hurt last night, Lady Otterville? She wants to see you."

Millie's face turned very white.

"It was a woman, then?" she said. "I knew you thought so! But—"

"It was a woman; but there was no sin on his part," was the quiet reply. "When you find your husband, Lady Otterville—and I hope in Heaven that you will find him now that the truth has come to light—you may take him to your heart again without a single regret. He has been bitterly wronged."

They went together to the house where the poor dancer lay dying. There was no doubt of it—it was only a question of time, and the time was very short now.

There was no disfigurement. She might have been lying—only resting—after a performance, when they entered her room, and stood by her side.

She could speak to them, and her eyes rested on Millie mournfully as she sat down by her, and took her poor inert hand.

"Don't do that!" she said, with a shiver. "You will throw it away like a poisonous thing when you know all!"

"No, I will not!" Millie replied, and kept the hand while the woman went on.

"If your husband is dead," she said, slowly; "but he is not,—the dying see things clearly, and I am sure he is not! I say if he dies before you meet again it is I who have killed him! I killed him with that bit of paper!" she added, looking towards something lying on the table. "Read it, all of you. It is our marriage certificate!"

For an instant Millie loosed the hand she held. She seemed to understand everything now; but she looked into the dying face, and took it again—her marriage certificate.

Then she had never been Ulric's wife! He had deceived her. No; she would never believe that. He had himself been deceived!

"It is all correct," the dancer said, with a mournful smile. "Ulric Otterville and I were married, as it sets down, legally and truly married in a church. He was a green boy, and I—ah! I am going to my account. There is no need to speak of what I was. It is women such as I who are the ruin of lads like him."

"Don't speak of it," Dr. Dalrymple said, looking at his daughter; but Millie's face was bent over the hand she held, and he could not see how the words affected her.

"No; it is better not spoken," was the low reply; "the story of my career is not for her pure ears. In three months after that mad marriage I was dancing again in the fastest theatre in New York, and my husband was trying to forget his folly in the tangles of a South American forest. No one knew; I wanted nothing at his hands, money was plentiful enough with me. Then I heard that he was in England, and I showed myself. He ran away; he was in love with some girl, I was told, and I resolved to spoil his life, for he received a certificate of my death, and married. It amused me mightily, and I resolved that he should have a taste of the happiness in store for him, and then—"

"Ah, stop, we have heard enough!" Dr. Dalrymple said. "We understand now."

"Not quite," the dying woman said, with a strange smile on her face. "Have patience with me a little longer. I went to him in Munich. I had known of his expected arrival. He did not hide his light under a bushel on his tour, and I frightened him away. He gave me money to buy my silence,—it was sport to me to spoil his happiness. Till I came to lie here I did not realise what I had done."

"Say no more, for pity's sake," the Doctor said; "it is a miserable story, but nothing can mend it."

"It can be mended," she said, her eyes glittering. "I can confess, and perhaps it will

be taken into account up yonder. Who knows? That paper is one huge lie!"

"A lie!" It was the lawyer who spoke.

"Yes, I was never Ulric Otterville's wife. I had a husband living, from whom I had never been divorced. He is living now."

"Great Heaven!"

It seemed to them all that she must be wandering in her mind. It was difficult to believe with the fatal certificate before them that she was speaking the truth.

"Who is your husband?"

To the lawyer's unbounded amazement, she named one of the first musicians of the day; a man well known and everywhere respected.

"Send for him if you doubt me," she said. "He knows nothing of Madlle. Blumendorf, but he will remember Emma Agnew; so would Lord Otterville if he were here."

"My daughter has fainted, I think," Dr. Dalrymple said, hastily catching Millie as she would have fallen, and carrying her out of the room. "My poor darling, what a tangled web of deceit and sin you have been hearing of?"

The story was quite true. The hapless dancer lived long enough to be confronted with the man whom she had spoken of as her real husband; he recognised her at once, and was pained and shocked beyond measure at the manner of her death. He had lost sight of her for years, and only heard now and then of a profligate career, which made him shudder when he thought of it, and be thankful that she had chosen to free him from her presence and unholy influence.

The morning after Millie's interview with her she died, and they buried her quietly in one of the great cemeteries, and the world forgot that there had ever been such a woman. And Millie tried hard to forget the wrong that had been done her, and to live for her child, who would one day be Lord Otterville, and who was growing so like her lost Ulric.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT LAST.

"THEY are the best-looking French soldiers I have ever seen."

"Your experience is somewhat limited, my dear," Dr. Dalrymple said, as Millie made the above remark anent a body of men marching along the white terrace that overlooked the southern shore of the Mediterranean. "Where did you see French soldiers till you came here, child?"

"At Paris, papa," and Lady Otterville sighed, as she remembered how childishly delighted she had been with everything on that honeymoon tour that had ended so fatally. "Little, under-sized fellows they all looked, and so shabby!"

"I think that was the colour of their uniforms," the Doctor replied; "brick-dust is not pretty, and the red is of that tint. These men are shabby enough, in all conscience, but they look like soldiers."

They were at Algiers, the father and daughter, looking out on to the sea from what seemed to Millie a veritable Garden of Eden, so beautiful and luxuriant did everything seem to her.

A rather alarming illness of Miss Dalrymple had rendered it necessary for her to seek a warmer climate, and everybody had recommended Algiers, which had the charm of novelty to them all.

They had been two days in the place, and so far had not encountered any of the disagreeables that prevent life in Northern Africa from being all luxury.

Miss Dalrymple had borne the journey remarkably well, and declared herself getting better already, and the youthful master of the household (for everything gave way before the all-engrossing baby) had elected to be on his best behaviour in his new surroundings, and trouble no one more than was necessary.

"Algiers suited him," Millie announced,

gravely, and the Doctor said it was a comfort it did, or Lady Otterville would have rushed off to England again by herself if the dear child had shown any signs of indisposition.

He was asleep now, and his mother, looking as young as Millie Dalrymple had ever looked in her sauciest days, was free to amuse herself as she chose till he should wake.

She was watching the soldiers as they marched. They were waiting for someone or something, and were within a stone's throw of her as she stood.

Nearly eighteen months had elapsed since her father and sister had found her at death's door in the Hotel of the Golden Heart at Anschaffenburg, and time had brought its comfort, as it does to everyone, no matter how deep the trouble may be.

She had never ceased to think of her lost husband—her dead husband, as she had come to consider him; but it was only with regret, and pity for the wicked deception that had sent him away from her.

She had hoped and prayed that they might meet again, that he might be still alive, and would acknowledge in some way the imploring advertisements and messages that the daily papers carried for him till they became a by-word through their persistency.

No answer came, and she began to think that Heaven had no pity, and that Providence was deaf. It was all the same. Ulric was dead, and only in the next world would she ever know where he had hidden himself, and why he had not come back to her.

Somehow he was very present to her now, as she leaned over the parapet by which she stood, and watched the soldiers, bronzed and bearded most of them, like men who had been under an African sun for years.

Ulric was dead—dead and cold in some out-of-the-way place, and she would never know.

No; he was alive, and coming straight towards her in the very middle of the advancing troop, a bearded and bronzed man like the rest, but with Ulric's eyes and Ulric's face drawing nearer and nearer, and she could not speak or move.

"Millie, child, what is it? What is the matter?"

She heard her father's voice, but it sounded like one afar off. She could not answer him; all her being seemed to have concentrated in her eyes, and she was watching the man. Nearer and nearer they came, marching with orderly tramp, every swinging footstep merging itself into the general whole till they seemed but one. They all looked towards her. Military discipline, be it never so strict, cannot prevent a man using his eyes, and she saw a change come into the face of the man. She had noted it turned white under the brown surface, and a look came into the eyes of keen pain.

"Ulric! Ulric!" she gasped, stretching out her arms. There seemed to be a stir in the ranks, a break in the tramp of footsteps, and Millie fell into blank darkness, and knew no more.

She came back to life with a pang, a sharp pain born of recollection, and she wished, before she opened her eyes, that she could die, now that memory had come back with such stinging power. Where was she? Who was with her? It was not her father's tweed suit that her head was resting on. It was something harder and rougher; yet she was being held with the utmost tenderness, and even, as she thought, passionate kisses were rained upon her face.

She was in the arms of a French chasseur; but a loving voice, unheard for many a day, was whispering her name in broken accents, and her husband's face was bending over her—Ulric Otterville, alive and in the flesh, found at last!

"I can't believe it. I cannot believe it," the Doctor said, as they all sat together in their own room. "We shall all wake and find ourselves at home again. That is my belief."

"So as I am there, too, it does not matter," Lord Otterville said. "I can hardly believe I

am really awake. Often I have had blissful dreams of such a meeting, and have waked on my straw pallet, and sometimes on the bare earth, to find it all an illusion. And to think that I have lost a year's happiness through not knowing! For the greater part of the time I have never seen an English face, or heard an English voice."

He broke down utterly, and Dr. Dalrymple led him away. It had been such an agitating meeting that he declared they should not see each other again for a week if they did not behave themselves. Alone with his son-in-law, he heard all that was worth telling about the disappearance that had puzzled everybody so much. Maddened by the reappearance of the woman he had supposed dead, Lord Otterville had resolved to be lost. She declared her intention of denouncing him, and seeing Millie, and telling her all about it. Made desperate by her reproaches, he walked out of the place, half resolved to end his troubles by a plunge into the sea. Hardly knowing what he did he walked away, after writing to Millie, and flung himself into the train that went eastwards. At Buda he met with an accident that confined him to a hospital bed for weeks, and when he recovered he resolved to go to Algiers, and lose himself in the ranks of the French army there. There was always an opening for men of strength and endurance, and he had both.

He was accepted at once, and for many months he had been away at various outlying stations, unknown and unheeded, till sent by the Providence that shapes our ends, his wife came to Algiers.

They told him gently how they had seen the woman he had married, and how she had confessed that she was not free to marry, and had never been his wife, and they showed him his son, and presently brought him to the belief that all that was happening to him was reality. The happiness was almost too much. The revulsion of feeling, after all he had undergone, well-nigh prostrated him, and for many weeks Millie had to watch by his sick bed, hoping and fearing alternately. The hope triumphed. Ulric Otterville got well at last, and a happy party set out for England, to take their places in society, and set all the fashionable world wondering at the sudden resurrection of one whom they had come to consider as dead. All sorts of stories are rife as to the reason of Lord Otterville's sudden vanishing, and his still more sudden reappearance. But the secret has been well kept; and only those who are intimately connected with the genial young nobleman, and his pretty wife, know that the cause of it all was what the lawyer opined—a woman!

[THE END.]

FACETIÆ.

"This is not what it's cracked up to be," as the miner said who pulverized quartz for gold and found only mica.

WHAT man is it that, when you have any dealings with him, you always like to have "give you fits?" Your tailor.

A YOUNG lady attending balls and parties should have a female chaperon until she is able to call some other chap her own.

"LIFE is full of golden opportunities," remarks a philosopher, "but they aren't worth their salt when you try to cash them."

THE young lady who had a poor partner in the waltz changed him for a more skillful one because, she said, she believed in the better whirled.

THE pedestrian fever has extended to the most secluded precincts of the family circle. We hear of several young ladies of highly respectable parents who are in training to walk, and nearly everyone of them is under two years of age.

A SAILOR, on the way to his ship, met a boy on his way to a circus. "I am going to see," said the sailor. "I am going to see, too," responded the boy."

AN old bachelor, who is not at all posted as to the fashions, says he would "like to know what the difference is between a travelling dress and a walking suit."

"WHY do you publish so many records of crime?" asked a gentleman of the late Horace Greely. "Because they are the *sine qua non* of the paper," was the reply.

SERVANT (to head of the house): "The butcher boy, sir, is at the door with the bill. What shall I tell him, sir?" Head of the house: "Tell him to send a ten-pound sirloin roast for dinner."

"IF"—"I would box your ears," said a young lady to her stupid and tiresome admirer, "if—" "If what?" he anxiously asked. "If," she repeated, "I could get a box large enough for the purpose."

TERRIBLE EXAMPLE. "I know a victim to tobacco," said a lecturer, "who hasn't tasted food for nearly thirty years." "How do you know?" asked an auditor. "Because the tobacco killed him in 1856," was the reply.

CONJUGAL AFFECTION.—Husband: "And so, Doctor, you think my wife will get well?" Doctor: "I am sure of it, if you can persuade her to take this dose." Husband: "Doctor, take it she shall, if I have to break every bone in her body."

THE subject for conversation at an evening entertainment was the intelligence of animals, particularly dogs. Said Smith: "There are dogs that have more sense than their masters." "Just so," responded young Fitznoodle, "I've got that kind of dog myself."

STRONG-MINDED WIFE.—"Eh, Jeames, you are great on languages; what is the difference between exported and transported?" Submissive Husband: "Why, my dear, if you should go to the East Indies you would be exported, and I—well, I should be transported."

THE ONLY ONE.—A man from a little village which shall be nameless, who lost his good character some time ago, being severely hauled over the coals by some of his former friends, said: "I know it, boys. I know my character's gone—lost entirely. And," he added, rather pointedly, "it's too confounded bad; for it was the only one in the place worth saving."

HAVING HER OWN WAY.—"So you are going to marry that small, wheezy, consumptive-looking specimen of a man are you?" said one girl to another. "I really don't see what you can see in him to love." "Mary, said her friend, "Mary, your father is a small man, isn't he?" "Yes," was the reply, "but what of that?" "Nothing, except that if he wasn't small it would be doubtful if your mother would be the boss. I'm going to marry that small man because I'm fond of having my own way, and won't accept any risks."

HAS CONQUESTS.—She was a young woman in London for the season, and was very fond of narrating her conquests and speaking of her powers over men. He was a bachelor with a heart of stone and a cheek of cast-iron. They were talking of love and matrimony and cognate subjects. "I've been engaged six weeks, Mr. X," with refreshing candour, in view of the fact that the announcement had appeared in the society news the next day after the proposal. "Ah!" he said, with a rosebud smile wreathed around an interrogation point; "how charming." "Delightful, Mr. X," she continued, radiantly; "he was an old friend of our family, and he was so persistent. How long do you think I kept the poor, dear fellow waiting for his answer?" and she giggled a real swell giggle. "Um—um," he cogitated, as if calculating an equation of time, "um—well, I should say about a minute and a half, possibly two minutes." There was an abrupt termination to the conversation, and the brute was left alone in the alcove where they had been talking.

SOCIETY.

Most people will agree with our contemporary, *Modern Society*, that Her Majesty makes a bad beginning to the Jubilee year when she slips away to the Isle of Wight, and intimates that she intends to remain in seclusion there until after the first notable function of the year—the opening of Parliament. At the moment of writing it is hoped by some that Her Majesty may change her mind yet once again, and re-decide to open Parliament in person.

SOCIETY is very quiet just now, and no very great events are expected till after Parliament meets. Lord Randolph Churchill's resignation is the theme of conversation in every circle, and more than one authority confidently reports that it is in great measure due to the influence of his charming, clear-headed, and energetic wife.

Mrs. Mackay, says a contemporary, is believed to have the largest and finest sapphire in the world. It formerly belonged to a Russian prince, from whom Mrs. Mackay purchased it for 750,000 francs, the gem being over an inch in diameter and without a flaw. The same lady has also one of the most splendid emeralds known to exist, a matchless pearl necklace, which cost her 500,000 francs, and a set of coral, comprising earrings, brooch, coronet, bracelet, &c., of the most delicate shade of pink, each piece being surrounded by diamonds. It took two years and a half to collect these, and there is only another parure like it, which belongs to the Queen of Portugal. Among these ornaments owned by Mrs. Mackay may also be mentioned a pair of diamond solitaire earrings valued at £5,000. One was bought at the sale of the Duke of Brunswick's treasures, and it occupied a Paris jeweller two years to find a match for it.

THERE were the usual preliminaries to the religious wedding of Mlle. MacMahon of a civil wedding and a contractual *fete*, which on this occasion took place in the daytime, and was called a *matinee*. The nuptial benediction was given at noon in the Church of St. Clotilde, Paris. The bridegroom, Comte de Pienness, is evidently of English origin, his family name being Hallwin. He is a son of the Marquis de Pienness, Chamberlain to the late Emperor.

The church was bright with military uniforms and decorations, and the Marshal wore his full dress uniform, the Grand Cordon of the Legion of Honour, and the military medals of the campaigns in which he served.

The bride wore a dress and veil of a very choice kind of Limerick lace, which served for her mother's wedding. The veil was arranged on her head *à la Juive*—that is to say, with a part of it falling square over the face to the bust. A small wreath of orange blossoms was placed on the top of the head, which was dressed high. The green sprigs were not of myrtle, but shamrocks.

Marshal MacMahon's daughter does not inherit the strikingly Irish physiognomy of her father, but she has a very blooming, fresh complexion, which she takes from him, and gives one the impression of softness of disposition, simplicity, and a touch of shy reserve. The music was very fine, and the vocal part was executed by operatic artists.

According to an old French fashion now going out, the bride and bridegroom, after they signed the registry, stood in the sacristy together, supported by their respective families, to receive the congratulations of their friends who had come to witness the ceremony. The reception took at least two hours.

On the 16th ult. was celebrated at St. Jude's, South Kensington, the marriage of Mr. W. Oliphant Morrison, of Edinburgh, with Miss Emily E. Bonafield, daughter of Mr. E. H. Bonafield. The bride's dress was of rich white satin, with pearl embroidered panel, and waistcoat of pearl embroidery. She carried an enormous bouquet.

STATISTICS.

SIXTY-FIVE varieties of lettuce are known to horticulturists.

FIFTY thousand tons of soot were taken from London chimneys last year. Its value was fixed at £40,800—as a fertilizer.

On the opening of Parliament a plan will be proposed for the redemption of tithes by landowners. By this plan the tithe is first taken at £4 000,000, from which amount the following deductions are made:—£200,000 for cost of collection at 5 per cent.; £400,000 for the reduction in the value of the tithe, the payment being now 90, or 10 per cent. below the par value of 1836; and another sum of £400,000 is deducted for rates and taxes. This calculation leaves a net sum of £3,000,000, which, it is proposed, shall be redeemable at the price of twenty years' purchase, or £60,000,000. The landlord is to be able to borrow the price of redemption from the Government at 4 per cent., and the payment of that rate of interest, which is to include sinking fund, for about forty years would, it is estimated, entirely discharge the debt. Whether the proposed scheme will be well received remains to be seen.

GEMS.

THE prodigal robs his heir, the miser robs himself.

THERE are many more shining qualities in the mind of man, but there are none so useful as discretion.

WHAT can we do, each of us, to help others to bear their burden of sadness? This: If we are merry, our mirth will not be lessened by trying to bring good cheer to others less fortunate than ourselves; if we too, are sad, our sadness will be made lighter by forgetting ourselves in thinking for others.

THE cowardice which is degrading, and which we should all deeply despise, is that lack of moral courage which leads us to stifle our own convictions and violate our own consciences for fear of the ridicule or contempt of some one who stands by. Usually we shall find that the one whom we thus fear is worthy neither of our respect nor of our admiration.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

THE secret of mashing potatoes is to have all the utensils used as hot as possible, and beat the mass till light instead of pressing down smooth and solid, adding cream, butter, and salt at will. A desirable result is reached by rubbing the mashed potato through a colander, and leaving it just as it falls into the dish.—*Good Housekeeping*.

TIME-TABLE FOR BOILING VEGETABLES.—Potatoes, half an hour, unless small, when rather less. Cabbage and cauliflower, twenty-five minutes to half an hour. Carrots and turnips, forty-five minutes when young, one hour in winter. Beets, one hour in summer, one hour and a half, or even two hours, if large, in winter. Onions, medium size, one hour.

POT ROAST OF BEEF.—Get four or five pounds from the rump without bone. Cut gashes lengthwise, and lay in strips of salt pork. Put in a broad pot, and pour in a cup of boiling water. Cover tightly, and let it cook about two hours, turning once. During the last half-hour baste several times. Then put the meat when done in a covered dish to keep warm, while you cool the gravy by setting it in cold water. When the fat rises skim off every particle, return the gravy to the fire in a saucepan, thicken with brown flour, boil up, and serve. Even the coarser pieces of meat may be made palatable by this mode of cooking.

MISCELLANEOUS.

How comforting is light! Were there no light from without to illumine objects for us, we should perish in gloom—in nightly shadowiness. And Light is a gentle friend that watches by us, and when we are sunk in sorrow points out to us that the world is still there, that it calls and beckons us, and requires of us duty and cheerfulness. "You must not be lost in self," it says; "see, the world is still here, and a friend beside us is as a light which illumines surrounding objects: we cannot forget them: we must see them and mingle with them."

WITH AND WITHOUT ANIMAL SPIRITS.—"She is the liveliest child I ever knew, of my own or of others," said a lady, some years ago, of her daughter of thirteen summers; "she is everywhere at the same time, upstairs and downstairs, with the chickens in the yard, and in the barn for eggs. It's her animal spirits, I suppose, and it's about time for her to sober down," by which the good woman meant she should stay in the house, and learn the accomplishments, and fit herself for society. The fate of her older sister, a languid miss of seventeen, has no suggestion for the mother. This invalid daughter has been "finished," and she was nearly so as to the uses of practical female life. She was tired, spent much of her time in bed or on the lounge, and was unfit to be married. And the mother was about to commence a treatment with the child which would have resulted likewise. There are nations and families—how fortunate!—that have escaped this notion, that animal spirits in girls must be murdered, and death take their place, in obedience to social behests. The late Bishop Whitehouse once said to the writer, "In Europe I have had occasion to admire the beauty in connection with high physical life of girls; they ride, they row, they swim, in connection with study or the pursuit of accomplishments, till they are twenty-five, or until marriage." Let the girls, then, run, and do not check them and make them feel they ought to be ashamed to exhibit vitality. Let them fulfil their teens in company with animal spirits. Their studies and their accomplishments will not suffer, do not fear. Mothers, it is well worth your while to try it!

LIFE IN DARMSTADT.—Darmstadt is about the dullest capital in the world. It has enormously wide streets, in which a human being is rarely to be seen. In the centre of the town is a gloomy schloss, which is the royal palace. I was once an attaché to the Legation which was accredited to the extinct German confederation that used to sit at Frankfurt. The Legation was accredited to the Grand Duke of Darmstadt, and two or three times a year we had to go over to Darmstadt to figure at a State ball. I remember that I was at first somewhat astonished to remark that the guests arrived in coveys until it was explained to me that as none of His Serene Highness's subjects had carriages, it was the kindly habit of the potentate, when he gave a ball, to send a conveyance around the town, and bring his guests by omnibus loads. I still think with awe and reverence of these august creatures, every one of whom was a noble, for none but nobles were regarded as fitting guests for the grand ducal balls. The minister in whose suit I went was, it was known, fond of whist, and it was felt that an English diplomatist could hardly be expected to play the game for less than florin points (1s. 8d.). Such stakes, however, the fortune of no Darmstadt noble could stand. A sort of joint purse was therefore formed, which was entrusted to the three best whist players of the grand ducal court, and these champions encountered the Englishman. It was amusing to watch the anxiety depicted on all countenances. When the minister won all was gloom; when he lost, counts and countesses, barons and baronesses, skipped in high glee, like the hills of the psalmist.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

V. O'S.—Yes; if agreeable and friendly.

MARY W.—Yes.

TOM R.—Quite legal.

JINKY.—Second syllable.

K.—They are the same.

T. T. N.—Very neat and pretty.

T. A.—Oscar Wilde resides in England.

MAGGIE.—Handwriting moderate. Practice from good copies.

JACK.—You would be considered a first-rate penman by competent judges.

W. T.—Yes, if the features are correspondingly regular, and the expression good.

T. W.—Despair at twenty-three! Certainly not; nor at forty-three. Never despair.

W. K.—No. About twenty-one, and let the young man be five or six years older.

G. H.—There is no known method of removing moles from the body without injuring the skin.

LENA GARY.—Tied with white golden brown; tied with black auburn; both handsome shades.

POLLY.—Very great harm. A confirmed flirt is a detestable creature in the eyes of every right-minded man.

A. M. D.—Let the young man declare for himself. A judicious hint to his sister would not perhaps do any harm.

FLORENCE.—Yes, but plenty of soap and water (Curtis is as good as any), and exercise in the fresh air are better.

HAGGIE.—All depends on ability and connection. You ought not to marry on a mere liking, but as you admit preference the love may grow.

N. O. M.—There are so many magnificent theatres and hotels in London that we cannot presume to say which is the best or most fashionable.

N. H.—The name of such works is legion; get a good dictionary and a book of popular readings; any good bookseller would supply you with a list.

K. W.—It would be better to break off the correspondence than keep it up clandestinely. Why not ask your mother to say plainly what her objections to it are?

C. O. JONES.—Thanks for your good opinion. There is a capital work on the subject in *Wool's Series*, published by Crosby Lockwood & Co., Stationers' Hall Court.

FLORENCE.—Actresses have to study very hard, and to acquire any position must be well educated. Sixteen is not too old to begin, but the apprenticeship is severe and disheartening.

H. L. S.—The common mode of preparing lavender water is to put three drams of the essential oil of lavender, and a dram of the essence of ambergris into one pint of spirits of wine.

MAGGIE.—In some circles all games of cards are forbidden, but among what are known as society people, and in fashionable circles, it is not considered improper for a lady to indulge in them.

LOVES OR WORK.—Sidering liquid is made by taking hydrochloric acid a quarter of a pint; granulated tin, one and a half ounces; dissolve, and add some common solder and hydrochlorate of ammonia.

PUEZZED VERA.—There is no true love unless it be honest, virtuous love. It is foolish and wicked for you to listen to the young man's protestations of affection, and he is a scoundrel for making them.

M. M. W.—It should be white wine vinegar. To preserve rhubarb in pieces all that is necessary is not to let it boil sufficiently long for the rhubarb to become soft; otherwise it is done in the usual way.

L. G.—The deafness is probably caused by an accumulation of wax, perhaps due to a cold; if so it can be removed by carefully syringing the ear with warm water; but the operation should be performed by a surgeon.

DICK DOUBTFUL.—Of course the lady should not go out with any one else. But if you want your freedom, as you call it, why not let the young lady keep company with her new admirer? Should she do that, she would have no further claim on you.

FRED ALAY.—The name is pronounced *Ross*, though spelt *Rousseau*. He was a famous French philosophical and sentimental writer. He was born at Geneva in 1712 and died suddenly in 1778. He was one of the pioneers of the French Revolution.

C. H. H.—It would be useless to give advice to one who, having had such a sad experience with a lover given to drink, avows her intention to marry him under any circumstances. Your idea that perhaps you can reclaim him from the habit after marriage is a most commendable one, but in this case, as presented by your reformer's remark out of the question, and you would only be jeopardizing all future happiness in linking your fortunes with one who is a self-confessed drunkard. You are young and inexperienced, and this schoolgirl infatuation can be easily conquered if you choose to exercise the will and reasoning powers with which ordinary mortals are endowed.

VIOLET.—Not at all too old.

ADIE.—Send him a card and get a young lady friend to write the good wishes on the back, but do not let her know to whom it is to be sent.

WILL J. M.—Easter Sunday in 1878 fell on April 21st; the following year it occurred on the 15th of that month. In 1810, it came on March 24th.

JULIA W.—Any of your friends could judge of your penmanship, and their criticism would, in all probability, be highly complimentary; in fact, it could not be otherwise.

ALICE B.—There will be no impropriety in giving such a near and dear gentleman in friend a lock of your hair, if he has expressed a desire to possess such a valuable souvenir.

BELLA M.—You may be altogether mistaken as to your parents' intentions. We advise you to remain at home and to be patient. You will find that your parents are your best friends and advisers, and will do nothing to cause you unhappiness.

J. R. S.—If a gas-jet was turned on in a close room, and a person was to enter the room with a light or strike a match, the result would be an explosion, and if there was anything of a combustible nature in the room, it would probably be set on fire, and a conflagration would follow.

O. R. Y.—Oil marks and spots where people have rested their heads can be taken from wall-paper by mixing pipeclay with water to the consistency of cream, laying it on the spot, and letting it remain until the following day, when it may be removed with a penknife or brush.

WINTER DAYS AND NIGHTS.

Oh, Winter's come! Oh, Winter's come!
White-mantled Nature cries.
Let us rejoice! the frolicsome
And happy world replies.
And now the vales and hills resound,
The town with life is gay.
And jovial pleasure takes its round
Throughout the night and day.

The merry coasters throng the slopes,
The bright-eyed girls and boys,
Among whose hearts are budding hopes
Of love's untasted joys.
While other hearts, fast in his spells,
Draw closer, side to side,
And dream of chiming wedding-bells,
As o'er the snow they glide.

But there are other pleasures known,
And free from change and guile,
Where Love makes each and all his own,
And peace is won to smile.
For, while the outward world is gay,
Love brings his sweet delights
To bless our hearts and homes away,
Through winter days and nights!

W. B. D.

GAST IRON.—1. Middle-aged. 2. There are plenty of advertisements in the papers about March. 3. Very good; indicates a decided character and a lively disposition. 4. Very similar to your own; would probably be less of a worry.

C. L. M.—The Dark Ages began in the fifth century, and lasted till near the fifteenth. The darkest period for Europe, generally, was during the seventh century. Things began to lighten up a little in France in the eleventh century. A knowledge of some arts was lost during the Dark Ages. In H. J. M.'s "Middle Ages," and White's "Eighteen Christian Centuries," you can get full accounts of those times.

YOUNG BROTHER.—To make ginger beer:—Take of white sugar, 10 lbs., lemon or lime juice, 18 oz. (fluid), honey, half-a-pound, bruised ginger, 11 oz., water, 9 gallons. B. all the ginger in a gallon and a-half of water for half-an-hour, then add the sugar, the juice and the honey, with the remainder of the water, and strain through a cloth. When cold add the white of one egg and a quarter of an ounce of fluid essence of lemon. B. till after it has stood four days.

G. F. D.—The Black Hole of Calcutta is a small, close dungeon in Fort William, at that place. On the night of June 20th, 1756, Suraj ud Dowla, the noted East Indian potentate, confined one hundred and forty-six British captives in this dungeon. They soon began to experience terrible agony from thirst and lack of air. In a few hours several of them died, and in the morning only twenty-three of them survived who were released. The Black Hole is or was recently used as a warehouse, and an obelisk, fifty feet high, erected in memory of the victims, stands before the gate.

N. H.—For a boy of eighteen years to speak of loving a mere child of fifteen is the vilest nonsense, and when he complains of her big folk's one is tempted to laugh outright. Her unformed mind is doubtless unable to grasp the true meaning of your puerile attentions, and consequently she fails to see why she should cherish companionship with any other boy acquaintances and devote her whole attention to you. Wait until you fully understand the true meaning of love between the sexes, and then perhaps there will be no more heartaches or misunderstandings, as the affections of both will in all probability be centred on some other objects.

MARQUETTE.—We have seen it stated that if a gentleman wants a wife, he wears a ring on the first finger of the left hand; if engaged, on the second finger; if married, on the third. The same rule applies to ladies. This might be termed the language of the ring, or the ring flirtation.

C. L. G.—We think that the difference in your ages does not constitute an insuperable bar to a happy marriage, but advise you to wait awhile. Age will diminish the disparity. Your parents are probably correct now. The lady should not be deprived of the pleasure of dancing.

S. L. K.—Unless engaged to marry the gentlemen, you should not have taken any presents from them, and now that your dream of love is dispelled, you should immediately return them, with the request that any little trinkets presented by you should also be sent to your homes without further delay.

GIPSY.—For offensive breath use the concentrated solution of chloric acid; from six to ten drops in a wineglassful of water taken at morning immediately after completing toilet operations. At the same time be sure to keep the stomach in order by plain living, exercise, and a little alterative medicine occasionally.

FRANK W. H.—There would be no impropriety in your speaking to the old gentleman on the subject, if you were less vain; but should you intimate to him that you are better educated than his daughter, and the other instances of your superiority given in your letter, we would advise you to keep out of reach of the toe of his boot.

L. R.—People afflicted with moist hands should indulge frequently in baths, take plenty of out-door exercise, adopt a nutritious but not over-stimulating diet, and, in extreme cases, take a tonic of some sort under the direction of a physician. Local applications of starch-powder and the juice of lemon may be used to advantage.

POLLY.—A true gentleman would not attempt such familiarity with his lady companion as to kiss her without having previously received permission to do so. Perhaps, in the case quoted, your escort acted on the spur of the moment, without any intention of insulting you; therefore, he should be forgiven, with a warning to desist in future.

JACQUELINE E.—As you are not the affianced bride of the gentleman in question, there is no reason for complaining of his habit of making himself agreeable to other young ladies. When he has proposed and been accepted by you, it is not at all likely he will indulge in flirtation, but, on the contrary, devote all his time and attention to you alone.

R. G.—There is a genus of plants, natural order *Scrophulariaceae*, called *Ferocaria*, consisting of herbs or undershrubs, many of which, and chiefly the German *Sperdell*, a native of Europe, are cultivated to adorn our flower-borders and greenhouses. Their flowers are generally produced in spikes, elongated spikes, and the blue colour predominates.

MAX D.—The coin is what is called a shop-token, issued by some English merchant in Gibraltar. Such tokens were used for small change, served as an advertisement for the merchant issuing them, and allowed him, as profit, the difference between their face value and the cost of making them, as long as they were allowed to remain in circulation. There is no regular market for such coins.

D. T. L.—The city of Chicago (U.S.) is not built on an island, but is divided by the Chicago River and its branches into three parts—the north, south and west divisions—which are connected by numerous bridges and two tunnels built under the river bed. The largest of these divisions is the west, which embraces 15,104 acres, while the south comprises 5,368 acres and the north but 2,883 acres. The length of the city from north to south is from seven to eight miles, and its breadth from east to west about five miles. It is the largest at primary grade, live-stock and lumber market in the world, and has a population of about 650,000 at the present date.

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